Meet the EXSA-Illence Award winners

MOZAMBIQUE: A MICE DESTINATION TO WATCH!

GROW WITH US

The Marriott Melrose Arch Collection of Hotels

We're celebrating industry legend Lindiwe Rakharebe! Find out more about Lindiwe's leadership style, values, inspiration, and more in this interview.
Mauritius has positioned itself as one of the top MICE destinations and being voted as the Indian Ocean’s Best MICE Destination for 2023 is the industry stamp of approval.

With a wide choice of accommodation options, activities, and venues, from stunning beach-side resorts to business hotels, independent conference rooms and the largest multipurpose conference centre in the region, offering state-of-the-art equipment and quality service, Mauritius is open for business.

This – and so much more – is what makes Mauritius the ideal destination for your next meeting, conference, group incentive or event... so, come and experience the island’s amazing warmth, people, and hospitality.

Mauritius is waiting to welcome you!

Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority – SA Representative:
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Email: mauritius@meropa.co.za
www mauritiusnow.com
06 COVER STORY: GROW WITH THE MARRIOTT MELROSE ARCH COLLECTION OF HOTELS

The Marriott Melrose Arch Collection of Hotels is striving to elevate their brand consistently and offer more – more choice, more experiences, more value – ultimately helping their clients to achieve more. Inspired by Marriott International’s future-focused philosophy of all-round growth and excellence, the Collection has launched into 2024 ready to exceed all expectations.

10 INDUSTRY LEGENDS: LINDIWE RAKHAREBE

Lindiwe Rakharebe is undoubtedly a MICE industry legend. During her tenure as the Durban ICC’s dynamic CEO and leader, Lindiwe has propelled the venue into the spotlight with accolades such as Africa’s and South Africa’s best convention centre, making Durban a sought-out MICE destination on the global map – and ultimately advancing South Africa’s MICE industry and the local economy.

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Each of these venues has such a different offering – but are alike in that they achieve it to perfection.

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Why choose Stellenbosch?

Conferencing Services
Stellenbosch University’s Central and Events Conference Office (CECO) is a professional support service and central point of contact for all your conferencing needs on campus.

Our capable team will see your project through from conception to completion. CECO can assist with project, legal and supplier management, financial modeling, guest, and client communication, as well as conference logistics.

Accommodation
The fully furnished, centrally located, self-catering Waldenhof and Crozierhof apartments provide a practical and comfortable base from where visitors can explore and experience this gem of the Boland. Larger groups can also be accommodated in Stellenbosch University residences during the winter and summer university holidays and form part of our budget accommodation portfolio.

Venues
We facilitate the venue bookings and events management for all event types: seminars, workshops, conferences, sport events and film shoots. Our facilities range from meeting rooms, academic spaces, world class theatres and outside spaces.

Our Venues:
Are within walking distance of restaurants, shops and museums. Stellenbosch is only a 40-minute drive to Cape Town International Airport.

- Outdoor & indoor spaces
- In-house professional technical teams
- State-of-the-art audio-visual equipment
- Generators
- Wi-Fi connectivity
- Airconditioning
- Cinema

Contact Us:
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CECOEVENTS
Stellenbosch University Central Events and Conference Office
Onwards and upwards, in 2024

While the local MICE industry continues to chart its recovery, there is a lot we can be proud of.

Meetings Jan/Feb 2024 has been an inspiring edition to put together. For one thing, our Industry Legends feature returns with another MICE icon. Lindiwe Rakharebe, the Duban ICC’s dynamic CEO and leader. Lindiwe’s people-first business style is one of warmth and kindness, inspiring those around her to be the best they can. This has resulted in numerous accolades for this outstanding venue, while supporting jobs and economic growth in Durban. Turn to page 10 to find out more about Lindiwe and her successes.

TOWARDS GREATER SUSTAINABILITY

Another inspiration for me has been the green thread that has emerged across these pages, demonstrating the progress our industry is making towards greater sustainability. Our cover story on the Marriott Melrose Arch Collection of Hotels’ growth strategy (growth for the brand and all its clients and partners) encompasses a shift towards greater sustainability with initiatives like its extensive rooftop solar installation (page 6).

Meanwhile the guide to creating eco-friendly exhibition stands shares how accessible greening can be (page 27) – shared by Chat’r Xperience, winner of the Best Green Event Award at the 2024 EXSA-llence Awards. (Turn to page 28 to meet all the winners.)

It doesn’t end there. AIPC shares some of the pioneering sustainable innovations at Javits Center in New York (page 38), and 3 risks to think about for events in 2024 also touch on the climate change challenge of extreme weather (page 36), while one of our fiv meeting spaces you NEED to know about is Hotel Verde Cape Town – Africa’s greenest hotel (page 20). And if you still need convincing that sustainable events is the future, don’t skip the PCO Alliance Network’s witty column on page 41.

MORE CHANGES AFOOT

Other exciting news includes the progress made developing destinations to attract more MICE business. Mozambique’s brand-new convention bureau is scheduled to be up and running later this year (page 12), while the Nelson Mandela Bay Convention Bureau shares some of its plans with us – including a proposal for a new convention centre (page 18).

On a personal note, another big change is that I am stepping down as acting editor at Meetings. My role was always a temporary one, as I have other long-term plans I had already committed to. But I’m so grateful to have had the opportunity in this role and to be a part of the 4Mal Media team and their journey. Of course, 4Mal Media’s journey is only getting started, and to take them forward they have secured a wonderful new editor. It gives me great pleasure to introduce you to Lia Marus. Lia is a highly skilled editor and writer who has worked in the publishing and digital marketing fields for more than 15 years – including at Meetings magazine, at one point! This makes hers perfectly suited for the role, not only as editor of Meetings magazine and our three other print titles – The Meetings & Event Planner, The Exhibition Planner, and The Incentive Planner – but also as editor of theplannerguru.co.za and all its digital assets.

Please join me in welcoming Lia, and feel free to reach out to her at editor@4mal.co.za.

Until we meet again,

Pippa
At the end of 2023, Sun International announced that it has entered into an agreement with the shareholders of Peermont Holdings Proprietary Limited, a leading hospitality and entertainment group which includes the flagship Emperors Palace Resort, to acquire all of the issued ordinary shares and any claims on loan account against Peermont Group.

The estimated sale value is just over R3 billion.

Sun International CEO, Anthony Leeming, says, “Sun International has, over the last six years, repositioned itself from a highly geared hospitality and gaming group operating across several regions in Africa and Latin America to a simplified and locally empowered South African-focused, cash-generative business with disciplined capital allocation principles. The Group’s strong performance over the past two years has increased available capital for the Group and put us in the enviable position of being able to consider value-accrue acquisitions at an attractive point in the cycle.

“The addition of Peermont’s land-based casinos to our portfolio, underpinned by the flagship Emperors Palace Resort, will enhance the quality of earnings and cash flow generation of the Group.”

With its unique proximity to the OR Tambo International Airport, Emperors Palace offers a gateway to high net-worth customers from the rest of Africa and abroad. This customer base will drive opportunities for synergies with the rest of the Group’s operations, including hotels and resorts, as well as the online sports and gaming business, creating large-scale benefits for Sun International.

PCO Alliance Network
nenounces new KwaZulu-Natal chapter

The PCO Alliance Network (PCOAN) in Gauteng was recently approached by a group of Professional Conference Organisers (PCOs) in KwaZulu-Natal, interested in forming a regional chapter of the PCOAN.

PCOAN chairperson, Ellen Oosthuizen, and vice chairperson, Cheryl Norwood-Young, were delighted to meet with this professional group of women on 29 January at a breakfast at the Coastlands Conference Centre organised by their spokesperson, Sharon Uys. At the breakfast, the KwaZulu-Natal PCOs discussed their business frustrations and their desire to be part of a professional body that has national recognition and influence in the MICE Industry.

It was unanimously agreed that the PCOs would benefit greatly by being part of a bigger, recognised body, and that the PCOAN would benefit likewise by having an extension of themselves in KwaZulu-Natal. The knowledge transfer of venues and suppliers will be invaluable.

“The PCOAN is looking forward to increasing its national footprint and working with and alongside the KwaZulu-Natal PCO Alliance Chapter,” says Ellen.

ANEW leads the EV charge!

In a notable stride towards sustainable hospitality, the ANEW Hotels & Resorts group has proudly unveiled four new electric vehicle (EV) charging stations strategically placed outside both ANEW Hotel Centurion Pretoria and ANEW Hotel Roodepoort Johannesburg.

Says Henry Swartz, ANEWs group facilities & risk manager, who initiated this project, “The decision to introduce these charging stations was inspired by the growing popularity of electric vehicles and the increasing need for convenient charging infrastructure across the country. ANEW wants to cater to the environmentally conscious travellers and the evolving technological needs of our guests.

“We have partnered with Mercedes-Benz and Chargify to roll out a vast amount of branded EV chargers across the country, and we are very excited to further expand the footprint of EV charging stations.”

Conveniently located outside each property — ANEW Hotel Centurion in the guest parking lot and ANEW Hotel Roodepoort within the business complex — these electric vehicle charging points aim to elevate guest experiences while championing technological enhancement and innovation.
Registration open for Tourism Investment Forum Africa (TIFA) 2024

In a strategic move to drive investment opportunities across Africa’s travel and tourism sector, Africa Travel Week (ATW) has secured a partnership with Tourism Investment Forum Africa (TIFA).

Scheduled to run alongside WTM Africa from 10 – 12 April at the CTICC in the Host City of Cape Town, TIFA actively positions African destinations as attractive investment locations, further promoting growth and development in related sectors of their economies.

The three-day event programme for 2024 consists of investment opportunity showcases, presentations on policy, trends, and developments, expert panel discussions, and the chance to conduct site visits to various investment project locations.

To find out more, including details on how to attend TIFA 2024 and WTM Africa 2024, visit www.wtm.com.

THE GRANT WINDOW FOR THE GREEN TOURISM INCENTIVE PROGRAMME IS NOW OPEN

Launched in 2017 by the Department of Tourism, the aim of the Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP) is to encourage and support private sector tourism in their quest to manage and use water and power sustainably. It is managed by the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) on behalf of the Department.

Qualifying tourism enterprises are invited to apply to the GTIP for funding for a resource efficiency audit and, based on the findings, funds for a solution such as solar panels or something similar.

For the current financial year, the GTIP has set aside approximately R200 million that will be allocated in grants. To date, the programme has already assisted 173 tourism businesses across the country to the tune of almost R105 million.

The window period for applications is open until 31 March 2024.

Find out more about the programme, including how to apply, at www.tourism.gov.za.

Sibaya Casino & Entertainment Kingdom’s R44 million refurbishment

Sibaya Casino & Entertainment Kingdom underwent a R44-million décor refurbishment to add a sense of African glamour to the North Coast playground, ahead of the establishment’s 19th birthday this past December.

The property encompasses a conference centre, casino, entertainment area, and two hotels – the three-star 118-room Sibaya Lodge and the five-star 36-room boutique Royal Sibaya – all of which have a chic new look that pays contemporary homage to the proud heritage of the Zulu kingdom.

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The Marriott Melrose Arch Collection of Hotels is boldly growing into the future and invites you to grow with it.

The Marriott Melrose Arch Collection of Hotels is striving to elevate their brand consistently and offer more – more choice, more experiences, more value – ultimately helping their clients to achieve more. Inspired by Marriott International’s future-focused philosophy of all-round growth and excellence, the Collection has launched into 2024 ready to exceed all expectations.

“We want to invite those who haven’t yet tried us to put us to the test and kick off 2024 with not only the right partner but an industry leading partner,” challenges Alison Turner, cluster director of marketing.

Here are some of the ways that the Marriott Melrose Arch Collection of Hotels is giving their clients more:

‘FOUR UNIQUE PROPERTIES AT ONE ADDRESS’ is a key differential at the Marriott Melrose Arch Collection of Hotels. Each of the four properties offers a distinct value proposition and brand experience (see ‘Meet the Collection’), with the added benefit of being able to collaborate seamlessly within the cluster so giving clients access to even more options.

A CENTRALISED EVENTS BOOKING TEAM and dedicated online platform that work together to manage all inquiries in one place, fluidly integrating all four brands. This empowers the teams operating within the properties to work together in a dynamic and resourceful manner.

AN INCREASED SALES TEAM with an assigned planning manager to ensure every client has personal service and solutions tailored exactly to their needs, as well as more effective and efficient planning procedures. Every client also receives an in-depth pre-conference session to ensure that every detail is to their satisfaction.

PREMIUM ROOMS with exclusive concierge floors have been introduced into the hotels. This allows clients to book upgrades and elevate their stay further. The Premium Rooms and the brand experience they offer are as unique as each of the hotels, from a Rodeo Drive Room to a Marriott Concierge Experience, there is something for everyone.

OVER 20 CUSTOMISABLE MENUS are available to choose from, all of which incorporate sustainable principles. From how the ingredients are sourced to how food waste is managed, the kitchens adopt a considered approach throughout the food service process.
The property is also home to two restaurants: Keystone Bistro. Servicing the Marriott Hotel and the Marriott Executive Apartments, the Keystone Bistro Restaurant has recently refreshed its offering, drawing inspiration from a nation famed for both its love for food and its culinary expertise – France. The vision behind Keystone’s new dining experience and exquisite menu is encapsulated by the sentiment of la joie de vivre, or “the love of life” or “a joy in living”. What remains unchanged is the venue’s sophisticated ambiance and the staff’s attentive and skilled service.

**AN EXTENSIVE ROOFTOP SOLAR INSTALLATION** is another significant way that sustainable stays are being promoted. The result is that the Johannesburg Marriott Hotel Melrose Arch and the African Pride Melrose Arch, Autograph Collection now deliver an uninterrupted, sustainable power supply. Lastly, **MARRIOTT BONVOY EVENTS** is a loyalty programme that unlocks global benefits for meeting and event planners. With over 5 700 participating properties across 30 brands, members receive a host of benefits such as destination insights and advice, case study success stories, exclusive promotions, and the opportunity to earn and spend reward points. Alison says, “We want to gain more than just a once off transaction – we want to create a long-lasting relationship with our clients and reward them for their loyalty, so we encourage them to join Marriott Bonvoy Events for their business requirements. Join today! Visit marriottbonvoyevents.com.”

Clients can also sign up as an individual traveller and experience the Marriott Bonvoy Loyalty programme, adds Alison; “It’s an unrivalled travel programme that goes beyond rewards to connect our members to more of what they love. Thirty extraordinary hotel brands. Endless experiences. It’s free to join and members can enjoy access to exclusive rates and member offers. Members earn points when they stay at any of our 30 brands at over 8 200 hotels around the world. These points can be redeemed for once-in-a-lifetime experiences, free nights, and much more.” Visit www.marriottbonvoy.com/jnbmc to enrol for free and earn elite status after just 10 qualifying nights. This will automatically unlock more benefits such as priority late check-outs and bonus points on stays.

**JOHANNESBURG MARRIOTT HOTEL**
- **7 EVENT ROOMS | 9 BREAKOUT ROOMS | 854 SQM TOTAL EVENT SPACE | 420 LARGEST SPACE PAX**

A premium business and business events destination, the Johannesburg Marriott Hotel Melrose Arch is the ultimate venue for large groups and corporate gatherings. With 334 rooms, state-of-the-art business facilities, and a choice of spaces in which to connect, relax, socialise, or reflect, it epitomises convenience and professionalism, elegantly packaged for ultimate enjoyment.

**MEET THE COLLECTION**

“We want to invite those who haven’t yet tried us, to put us to the test and kick off 2024 with not only the right partner, but an industry leading partner.”

The property is also home to two restaurants:

**Keystone Bistro**

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At the African Pride Melrose Arch, Autograph Collection, clients can indulge in absolute luxury and refinement infused with the DNA of Africa. Striking, artistic, inventive ... this 5-star boutique hotel is a popular destination for both business and leisure travellers who desire a unique and extraordinary experience.

In addition to the casual outdoor Pool Bar, two new restaurants have opened at this sought-out address:

**Aduna Bistro**
Sophistication meets comfort at Aduna Bistro, with its relaxed charm and the palpable pride it takes in its welcoming ambiance, flawless service, and delectable contemporary cuisine – all of which are artfully combined to deliver a truly memorable experience.

**Sebule Restaurant**
Sebule is Swahili for “living room” which perfectly captures the serene and warm essence of this upmarket establishment. Here guests savour traditional African dishes reimagined with a contemporary twist, including chargrilled steaks and seafood, as well as a curated selection of exceptional wines from the exclusive wine room.

**The Restaurant**
Just like the hotel, The Restaurant delivers glamour with a youthful confidence and is the perfect place for those who want to see and be seen. The menu is famed for its Hollywood brand of succulent burgers and gourmet milkshakes – with a variety of flavours to choose from!

**Archer’s Bar & Eatery**
Looking for the perfect sundowner location or lunchtime breakaway during a meeting or conference? The Archer Bar & Eatery is the perfect social collective space; a vibrant spot favoured by many locals who are drawn to its specialty coffees, craft beers, creative mixology and carefully curated cocktails, as well as locally inspired street food fare. The simple menus are customisable and cater perfectly for a wider group of individuals.

**Marriott Executive Apartments**
Marriott Executive Apartments Melrose Arch offers a welcoming haven for discerning business travellers, with its premium, fully serviced apartments, and access to a variety of dining, shopping, and entertainment destinations within the Melrose Arch Precinct.

The one-, two- or three-bedroom apartments all come with a fully equipped kitchen, dining area, and lounge, as well as access to numerous hotel services, including room service, undercover parking, 24-hour security, a fitness centre and swimming pool, and conference spaces.

**AFRICAN PRIDE MELROSE ARCH, AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION HOTEL**
11 EVENT ROOMS | 5 360 SQM TOTAL EVENT SPACE | 55 LARGEST SPACE PAX
Marriott’s Autograph Collection of Hotels is a global collection of distinctive independent hotels with one thing in common: they are exactly like nothing else.

**YE CAN ALSO VISIT**
for more information visit deals.marriott.com/south-africa/marriottmelrosecollection. Alternatively, call 010 495 4200.

**YOU CAN ALSO WATCH OUR VIDEO HERE:**
https://we.tl/t-r1UhVT2SqI
From 10-12 April, The City of Cape Town hosts WTM Africa for it's 10th edition. The event is Africa’s leading and only B2B exhibition for both inbound and outbound travel and tourism markets, presenting a diverse range of destinations and industry sectors to travel professionals across the globe.

Through its industry networks, global reach, and regional focus, WTM Africa creates personal and business opportunities providing our customers with quality contracts, content, and communities.

**WHY VISIT?**
- One-on-one meetings
- Speed networking
- International media
- Content sessions
- Engaging workshops
- Associations and media partners
- Ministerial round table
- Networking events & experiences
- Hosted buyer program
- Annual Trend report
- Cutting-edge systems & platforms
- Product launches
- Sister suite of niche events
WHAT MOTIVATES AND INSPIRES YOU TO GET OUT OF BED EVERY MORNING?
People, people, people – employees, suppliers, clients, heads of state, celebrities, royalty, sports luminaries – I am blessed to meet, engage, and learn every day from people of all walks of life. I also love developing people; I strive to do it in both my professional and personal capacity, and it is an ongoing passion of mine.

PLEASE DESCRIBE A TYPICAL DAY IN YOUR LIFE AS CEO OF THE DURBAN ICC.
Overall, a typical day is a whirlwind of activity, but it’s also very rewarding. Each day brings new challenges, opportunities, and experiences that contribute to our collective mission of delivering exceptional events and making a positive impact on our community and stakeholders. My role is to provide the overall strategic leadership to the organisation by establishing the direction and tone, whilst overseeing all internal management and operations.

My day usually begins early as I like to start with some personal devotion time and set my intentions for the day ahead. One of the first items on my agenda is typically reviewing emails and staying abreast of the news to keep updated with any urgent matters or developments that require my attention. I then proceed to meet with key members of my leadership team to discuss strategic priorities, operational updates, and upcoming events.

“I believe that leading with love and respect brings the best out of people.”

Throughout the day, I engage in a series of meetings, ranging from client consultations and project briefings to internal team meetings and stakeholder engagements. These meetings allow me to collaborate closely with my team, address any challenges or obstacles, and ensure alignment with our organisational direction.

In between meetings, I make it a point to connect with our staff members at all levels of the organisation, whether it’s through informal catch-ups, a quick chat, or even an encouraging hug. I believe in fostering a culture of open communication, empowerment, and continuous learning. These interactions are invaluable in nurturing a positive work environment and bringing the best out of people. My day often ends with a function or event at the Centre, where I represent the Durban ICC and advocate for our interests in the broader community.

WHICH OF YOUR PERSONALITY TRAITS AND ABILITIES DO YOU THINK ARE YOUR BIGGEST STRENGTHS IN YOUR ROLE AS CEO OF THE DURBAN ICC?
I believe that leading with love and respect brings the best out of people. Empathy is also very important in today’s workplace. I believe in principle-centred leadership, and I embrace five core values as a company. I do my best to live out these values every day and influence the corporate culture by the way I treat every member of the team. Our core values are:

- Respect
- Integrity
- Accountability
- Passion and commitment
- One team, one vision, united in diversity

INDUSTRY LEGEND

Celebrating
LINDIWE RAKHAREBE

Lindiwe Rakharebe is undoubtedly a MICE industry legend. During her tenure as the Durban ICC’s dynamic CEO and leader, Lindiwe has propelled the venue into the spotlight with accolades such as Africa’s and South Africa’s best convention centre, making Durban a sought-out MICE destination on the global map, ultimately advancing South Africa’s MICE industry and the local economy. Meetings sat down with Lindiwe.
WHO ARE THE COLLEAGUES, MENTORS OR ROLE MODELS WHO PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN YOUR CAREER, AND WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THEM?
My late grandmother was a major influence in my life. She was a strong woman, disciplined and compassionate, and she inspired me to be the best I could be. I am also inspired by other great female leaders like Sheryl Sandberg and Michelle Obama who are making an impact in their own unique ways.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE CAREER HIGHLIGHTS SO FAR?
We have hosted so many special events that it is difficult to choose a single one. However, two events were especially memorable for different reasons; the International AIDS Conference was a highlight for me. Not only was this the largest event of its kind ever hosted on the African continent but it was also an honour to host high-profile dignitaries sharing their support in fighting for this global cause. Another memorable event was the World Economic Forum on Africa; I remember how complimentary the organisers were about the Durban ICC and how our team went the extra mile to deliver such a wonderful event for them.

HOW DO YOU HANDLE UNEXPECTED CHALLENGES OR CRISSES THAT INEVITABLY ARISE IN THE EVENTS INDUSTRY, AND WHAT LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM THOSE EXPERIENCES?
In this fast-paced industry, unexpected challenges and crises are inevitable. The key to handling such situations effectively lies in our ability to remain calm and be agile and proactive in our response. Communication is paramount, both internally with our team members and externally with our clients and stakeholders. By maintaining open lines of communication and fostering a culture of transparency and collaboration, we can swiftly address challenges as they arise and implement solutions to mitigate their impact. Every challenge presents an opportunity for growth and learning.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE SA EVENTS INDUSTRY?
I love the industry’s vibrancy, diversity, and endless potential for innovation and creativity.

WHAT HAS THE EVENTS INDUSTRY DONE FOR YOU?
The events industry has been a transformative force in my life, both personally and professionally. It has provided me with opportunities to learn, grow, and contribute to the success of the Durban ICC and the industry globally. I have had the privilege of leading a dedicated team of professionals, collaborating with visionary board members, and making a tangible impact on the economic and social fabric of our region.

“It’s a dynamic landscape where ideas come to life, bringing people together from diverse backgrounds and cultures to connect, collaborate, and dialogue. The sense of community and camaraderie within the industry is truly inspiring, as professionals come together to create memorable experiences and drive positive change. I’m passionate about the role that the events industry plays in showcasing the richness and diversity of our country, contributing to economic growth, and fostering meaningful change which transcends boundaries.”

WHAT LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM THOSE EXPERIENCES?
The events industry has not only enriched my career but also allowed me to give back to society through initiatives focused on women’s empowerment, education, and community development. It is a source of inspiration and fulfilment, driving me to strive for excellence continually and create positive change in everything I do.

WHO ARE THE COLLEAGUES, MENTORS OR ROLE MODELS WHO PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN YOUR CAREER, AND WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THEM?
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The events industry has not only enriched my career but also allowed me to give back to society through initiatives focused on women’s empowerment, education, and community development. It is a source of inspiration and fulfilment, driving me to strive for excellence continually and create positive change in everything I do.

WHO ARE THE COLLEAGUES, MENTORS OR ROLE MODELS WHO PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN YOUR CAREER, AND WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THEM?
My late grandmother was a major influence in my life. She was a strong woman, disciplined and compassionate, and she inspired me to be the best I could be. I am also inspired by other great female leaders like Sheryl Sandberg and Michelle Obama who are making an impact in their own unique ways.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE CAREER HIGHLIGHTS SO FAR?
We have hosted so many special events that it is difficult to choose a single one. However, two events were especially memorable for different reasons; the International AIDS Conference was a highlight for me. Not only was this the largest event of its kind ever hosted on the African continent but it was also an honour to host high-profile dignitaries sharing their support in fighting for this global cause. Another memorable event was the World Economic Forum on Africa; I remember how complimentary the organisers were about the Durban ICC and how our team went the extra mile to deliver such a wonderful event for them.

HOW DO YOU HANDLE UNEXPECTED CHALLENGES OR CRISSES THAT INEVITABLY ARISE IN THE EVENTS INDUSTRY, AND WHAT LESSONS HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM THOSE EXPERIENCES?
In this fast-paced industry, unexpected challenges and crises are inevitable. The key to handling such situations effectively lies in our ability to remain calm and be agile and proactive in our response. Communication is paramount, both internally with our team members and externally with our clients and stakeholders. By maintaining open lines of communication and fostering a culture of transparency and collaboration, we can swiftly address challenges as they arise and implement solutions to mitigate their impact. Every challenge presents an opportunity for growth and learning.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE SA EVENTS INDUSTRY?
I love the industry’s vibrancy, diversity, and endless potential for innovation and creativity.

WHAT HAS THE EVENTS INDUSTRY DONE FOR YOU?
The events industry has been a transformative force in my life, both personally and professionally. It has provided me with opportunities to learn, grow, and contribute to the success of the Durban ICC and the industry globally. I have had the privilege of leading a dedicated team of professionals, collaborating with visionary board members, and making a tangible impact on the economic and social fabric of our region.

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Mozambique has long been a popular destination for South Africans. No less than 60% of international tourist arrivals in Mozambique in 2020 were from South Africa (Statista). In addition to its convenient proximity (with a Jo’burg-Maputo flight taking about an hour), it also boasts a rich natural and cultural heritage to dazzle visitors once they have landed. From azure lagoons and sandy white islands to flavourful cuisine with Arabic and Portuguese influences, a vibrant art and music scene, and a history that still bears scars on some of the local architecture – there is much to see and explore.

MAPUTO TODAY
During our visit to the capital city, it was clear that things are happening. From the abundance of construction sites (a trend which is not limited to Maputo) to grass roots movements such as Bring Back Maputo (using art and education to improve the city), there was an overwhelming sense of opportunity and optimism.

Our trip also coincided with FIKANI, Mozambique’s International Tourism Fair, which took place at Mozambique-China Cultural Centre from 30 November to 3 December 2023. The Minister of Culture and Tourism, Eldevina Materula, gave the welcome address where she shared that tourism grew by 12% in 2022, and that hotel occupancy was, at the time, above 80%. These healthy figures show that the nation’s post-Covid recovery is well underway. Despite these successes, the Mozambiquan Government and its National Institute of Tourism (INATUR) have recognised the untapped potential of the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) sector, also known as business events, to boost economic growth further and create jobs in the tourism industry in the country.

A LAND OF PROMISE
Katia Gaspar, Investment Officer for MICE at INATUR, she says, “The current state of the MICE industry in Mozambique is still in its infancy but promising. We have seen an increase in the number of international events hosted in our country, especially in the energy and mining sectors, agriculture, health, and others. We have also seen a growth in the number of venues, hotels, and service providers that cater to the MICE market, offering quality facilities and standards.”

Rick Taylor of The Business Tourism Company (TBTC), an African-based tourism consultancy specialising in development of the MICE sector throughout Africa, conducted a feasibility study on behalf of INATUR to determine Maputo and Mozambique’s market readiness for MICE. Rick says, “Maputo is market-ready for conferences, with opportunities in the associations segment. There are also some excellent products and experiences for incentive travel programmes in the islands, for which Vilanculos is the gateway.”

Launching Mozambique’s Convention Bureau
Despite its current achievements, more work needs to be done to raise the profile of Mozambique as a MICE destination and to build more partnerships and collaborations with relevant stakeholders.

Fortunately, these improvements are imminent, says Katia, sharing that the Strategic Plan for Tourism Development in Mozambique 2015-2025 includes creating a Convention Bureau and positioning Mozambique on the international MICE stage, proactively bidding for international and regional business events, and the incentive travel business market.

Many steps have already been achieved towards this goal including the feasibility study mentioned above, as well as mapping out a national MICE strategy sector roadmap including stakeholder mapping, goals and objectives, institutional arrangements, roles and responsibilities, MICE source markets, and financial and implementation plans. Financing from the World Bank to support implementing the MICE strategy has also been secured.
Rick explains, “For this final implementation stage, the intention is to establish the Mozambique Convention Bureau as a separate division within INATUR, appoint staff, and then we [TBTC] will deliver capacity-building for the Bureau and private sector to increase their competitiveness.”

“There is not yet a firm timeline for this, however we expect it to be launched in 2024,” adds Rick.

If you would like to reach out to INATUR to find out more about hosting your next MICE event in Mozambique, please email info@INATUR.gov.mz. You can also go to www.visitmozambique.gov.mz for more information.

**WHY MICE IN MOZAMBIQUE?**
Mozambique has many advantages as a MICE destination, some of which include:

**Strategic location** in Southern Africa, with easy access to major markets such as South Africa, Tanzania, and Europe (particularly through Portugal which has direct flights six days a week), as well as regional integration through SADC. Qatar Airways and Ethiopian Airlines connect Mozambique to most of the world, and both international and domestic air access is consistently improving.

**A diverse economy**, with robust sectors in energy, mining, agriculture, health, and fisheries create attractive opportunities for trade fairs, exhibitions, and business meetings.

A recent audit shows that the country has a good range of purpose-built, market-ready **facilities and services** that can meet the requirements of an international or regional meeting buyer. There is also a diversity of accommodation options, including more than 2 400 hotel rooms in the 3- to 5-star range in Maputo.

**Visa exemptions** are available for more than 28 countries.

**Natural beauty** – including the nation’s 2 500 km coastline shared with the warm Indian Ocean, and laced with pristine beaches, coral reefs, and islands, all of which are ideal for incentive travel.

**Unique adventure, eco-, and conservation tourism experiences**, due to the nation’s rare wildlife and protected nature reserves such as Gorongosa National Park, Niassa Reserve, and Bazaruto Archipelago present appealing add-ons for conferences and meetings, as well as the incentive market.

**Friendly and hospitable people** who are eager to welcome visitors and share their culture, gastronomy, and music.
MAPUTO HOTELS
While in Maputo, our tour included several site
visits of some of city’s best hotels. All the
properties had excellent business facilities,
including meeting rooms and, in many cases,
large conference venues and ballrooms.
Polana Serena Hotel is the city’s grand dame.
This 5-star establishment opened its doors
in 1922 and has hosted generations of world
leaders, politicians, diplomats, and corporate
executives over the years in its opulent meeting
spaces. From the ballroom to its sea-facing
terraces, it’s equipped to host a range of elegant
events of all sizes. Also worth mentioning is the
gorgeous Moroccan-styled Maisha Spa for those
in need of an indulgent treat.
Hotel Cardoso is another historic property. It
was built by Commandant Cardoso, captain of
the Lourenço Marques port, which is probably
why it boasts some of the best sunset views
overlooking Maputo Bay and the city. The 100+
year-old property has refurbishment plans in the
pipelines for its 130 rooms, plus an
exciting variety of conference and meeting
rooms to choose from.
Southern Sun Maputo is a beautiful hotel that
has a prime beachfront location with the beach
literally a few steps away from the manicured
lawns and infinity pool deck. Known for its
excellent service and welcoming ambiance, it is a
favoured choice for small to mid-size meetings
and special events.
Situated adjacent to Centro Internacional de
Conferências Joaquim Chissano (Joaquim
Chissano’s International Conference Centre),
the Radisson Blu Hotel towers afford enviable
sweeping ocean views while a divisible
conference room covering 252 m², three
breakout rooms, and a 153 m² pre-function area
provide an abundance of space for functions.
Refurbishments are also being planned for its
256 rooms and suites.
I was impressed with the City Lodge Maputo’s
welcoming and contemporary airy style and
friendly staff. In addition to 148 rooms there are
three spacious boardrooms that are a popular
option for business travellers.
The classy Hotel Avenida is 5-star hotel in the
heart of the city that is conveniently located for
business and leisure travellers alike, and it has a
comprehensive range of business facilities.
FOUR DAYS IN AND AROUND MAPUTO

Editor of Meetings, Pippa Naude, shares some of the highlights of the four-day press tour of Maputo, hosted by INATUR and organised by local DMC Dana Tours.

Food tour: On arrival, we immediately joined a food tour to welcome us to the city. Mozambique is famed for its fresh seafood (including the – I've been told and believe – world's tastiest prawns) and peri-peri (“spicy-spicy”) grilled chicken, but there is plenty more to sample. I really enjoyed the matapa or matata, a curry made with greens and peanuts and sometimes crab or shrimp, as well as the deep-fried bean fritters. And for those who love chili, fiery peri-peri sauces were a staple at every meal.

On the tour we sampled freshly squeezed sugar cane from a mobile cart, icy 2M beer at a restaurant next to the 95-year-old Cinema Scala, and a tasting menu at FEIMA, a laid-back and lush garden full of eateries and local artisans selling their wares. We capped it all off at Magumba market on Maputo’s waterfront. Here shipping containers have been repurposed as kitchens, covered in vibrant scenes by Mozambiquan artists, and local women have perfected the art of flame grilled chicken.

Historic tour: We visited several landmark buildings, including the Central Railway Station which was constructed from 1908 to 1916 in the Beaux-Arts style, and which has been described as the most beautiful terminus in Africa. The country’s past of war, espionage, and counter espionage means many of the buildings also have haunting stories attached to them.

Mafalala tour: Mafalala is one of the city’s oldest townships made famous by the many great talents it has produced – including the writer José Craveirinha and football legend Eusébio da Silva Ferreir. It also played a significant role in the nation’s resistance under Portuguese rule, and its rich history and culture are captured in several large and striking graffiti murals that brightly decorate the walls and walkways. A guided walking tour gave us a different perspective of life in Maputo, as well as the resilience of the people living here.

Macaneta Beach: On our final day we took an hours’ drive north to Macaneta Beach, a wild stretch of golden sand alongside a lagoon where a flock of flamingos flew lazily by. Mozambican environmentalist Carlos Serra’s Glass House is here, a building made entirely from glass waste reclaimed from the ocean, where it serves as a visual testament to both the problem of waste and a possible solution for it. The building includes a library where a literacy programme is run for the local fishermen, many of whom left school at a young age to enter the fishing trade.
Mauritius is open for business and this beautiful Indian Ocean island is the perfect destination to host your next group whether it’s for a meeting, incentive trip, conference, an event or exhibition. With its well-established, world-class MICE facilities and tropical setting, Mauritius is an ideal destination for South African groups looking for a unique and rewarding experience.

Combining quality and elegance with a touch of island-style flair, MICE buyers are invited to experience Mauritius for groups, large or small, all year round. No matter the size of the group, Mauritius delivers world-class, luxury MICE packages at superbly appointed, business-friendly venues across the island.

Over the years, Mauritius has positioned itself as one of the top MICE (Meetings Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) destinations, offering scenic beauty, hidden treasures to explore and an exotic melting pot of cuisines and cultures. Being named Indian Ocean’s Best MICE Destination for 2023 at the World MICE Awards is testament to this from the travel and tourism industry.

If you’re planning an incentive trip to reward your top performers, an international conference for a few thousand delegates, an exclusive high-level meeting for a business or government delegation, or a product launch event, look no further than the island for the perfect venue, staffed by a professional and dedicated support team, to deliver your special event.

Mauritius offers the MICE buyer the infrastructure to cater for a variety of groups and sizes, all year round, as a MICE-friendly destination. The quality and variety of accommodation, the attention to detail in service delivery, state-of-the-art conferencing venues, qualified and friendly staff, and a variety of additional activities on offer all guarantee a unique experience.

**WORLD-CLASS VENUES**

Boasting the largest and most modern multimedia convention centre in the Indian Ocean region, the Swami Vivekananda Conference Centre provides all the facilities needed for large, international conferences, and can accommodate up to 5 000 people. Other venues include the Free Port Trade & Exhibition Centre in Mer Rouge (up to 1 000 delegates), Trianon Convention Centre in Trianon (up to 3 000 delegates) and the newly opened The Caudan Conference Centre (up to 400) in Port Louis. Many of the Mauritian hotels and resorts also offer conference facilities and unique areas within the properties for spectacular marquees and set-ups to cater for up to 800 people at a time.

The island boasts a host of activities specifically geared for MICE groups, ranging from golf and adventure sports such as quad-biking, trekking, mountain biking and trail-running to zip-lining, fishing, kitesurfing, parasailing, canoeing and skydiving. Mauritius’ stunning outdoor locations are made for interactive and adrenalin-fuelled activities and adventures that are perfect for team building. There are also many cultural and culinary festivities and spiritual festivals that can be enjoyed.

Mauritius has a tropical climate with warm weather all year round. The best months to visit are from May to December.

Enjoy everything that Mauritius has to offer as your ideal MICE destination, combining quality, elegance and style in a perfect paradise island setting!

It’s time to meet in Mauritius and #FeelOurIslandEnergy.
Tshwane – an unforgettable experience in the heart of South Africa

Tshwane’s business events sector excels when it comes to business tourism. In addition to being the academic and diplomatic capital, Tshwane is now recognised as a leading business tourism and events destination. Tshwane has proven its ability to host large-scale exhibitions, conferences, concerts, extravaganzas, and sporting events that boast cutting-edge technology, especially at the up-market Time Square and SunBet Arena at Menlyn Maine.

**A MUSICAL MECCA**
Tshwane has become a haven for music enthusiasts, attracting thousands to spectacles like Afrikaans is Groot, which drew over 20,000 visitors to the city over the four-day festival at the SunBet Arena at Menlyn Maine. The Hey Neighbour Festival saw over 30,000 enthusiasts visit the city over three days in Cullinan, and the Africa Fest pulled in a crowd of more than 9,000.

**A GLOBAL AUDIENCE**
Sun International’s Time Square and the SunBet Arena, both situated at Menlyn Maine, promote events that are broadcasted globally, including the prestigious Top Model South Africa and Miss South Africa shows. This year promises another year of shows and productions that will solidify the city’s status as an entertainment destination.

**A HOST FOR MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS**
During 2023, Tshwane also emerged as a formidable contender in hosting major sporting events, such as the Africa Netball World Cup Qualifiers and the International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) Continental Qualifier for the 2024 Olympics. The city has firmly stamped its presence on the global sporting stage by playing host to a spectrum of prestigious international events, ranging from the Africa Gymnastics Championships to the World Rowing Masters Regatta, the Indoor Hockey World Cup and the Down Syndrome International Gymnastics (DSIGO) World Championships.

This year promises to bring more international sporting action, which everyone should look out for. The ABSA RUN, following its successful inaugural edition, is poised for a triumphant return to Tshwane in 2024 alongside many other local marathons.

**WILD ESCAPES IN DINOKENG**
Tshwane’s appeal extends beyond the urban landscape. Dinokeng offers an alternative conference and events setting amid wildlife encounters. The quaint town of Cullinan blends historical charm with modern amenities, while the countryside provides outdoor activities and bush getaways.

**A FUTURE-FOCUSED DESTINATION**
As Tshwane undergoes infrastructural upgrades to welcome more visitors, it remains a beacon of progress. Ald Hannes Coetzee, MMC for Economic Development and Spatial Planning, emphasises the importance of business events as drivers of economic vitality. “These actions propel us forward as a dynamic hub for commerce,” he says.

**CONTACT US**
If you would like more information for hosting your event in Tshwane, please contact Nonhlanhla Seoe, the deputy director: Business Tourism at the City of Tshwane: Tel: +27 (0)12 358 6347 E-Mail: nonhlanhnlaeseoe@tshwane.gov.za Website: www.discovertshwane.com or www.tshwane.gov.za
BRINGING BUSINESS EVENTS TO THE BAY

Doné Louw, manager of the Nelson Mandela Bay Convention Bureau, updates Meetings on his team's achievements in 2023 and plans for 2024 – including the groundwork for a new ICC.

The hefty return on investment that hosting business events can yield*, and the success of convention bureaus in attracting more business events to a destination, has seen an increase in the number of bureaus emerging across Africa, both on a national and regional level.

One such example is the Nelson Mandela Bay Convention Bureau (NMBCB). Although the Bureau existed for many years within Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism, it was in a limited form resting on the shoulders of a single staff member. It has now been given greater priority. In February 2023 it transitioned into a fully-fledged bureau with a team of three dedicated staff and a clear objective.

The Bureau is now led by Doné Louw, who has been working for Nelson Mandela Bay Tourism for just over 20 years. He says, “Looking ahead, our long-term vision involves identifying tailored business events opportunities in collaboration with industry stakeholders, particularly those related to economic clusters within Nelson Mandela Bay. Through these initiatives, we aspire to stimulate enterprise development and growth opportunities for local businesses, ultimately contributing to the overall economic growth of Nelson Mandela Bay.”

A NEW ICC ON THE CARDS

An exciting initiative that will position the Bay as an attractive destination for large international conferences, exhibitions, and events is the proposed development of a new International Convention Centre (ICC) in Gqeberha, the Nelson Mandela Bay metropolitan municipality’s largest city.

Doné says, “The Mandela Bay Development Agency (MBDA) has been actively engaged in talks with the business events sector, hosting events like the MBDA Bayworld Investment Roadshow. This roadshow focused on the planned construction of the Bayworld precinct, a mixed-use development spanning 55 ha and housing 13 proposed projects (including an ICC) at a projected cost of R6 billion. The precinct will be a significant catalyst for tourism growth in Nelson Mandela Bay and the Eastern Cape and it is an ideal location for the ICC.”

The roadshow assessed market appetite for partnerships with the MBDA on behalf of the municipality, while also seeking to unlock prime real estate for the ICC – with the land where the old Boet Erasmus Stadium was built (and later demolished) being eyed for it.

“Developers were engaged to gauge the feasibility and bankability of such a venture. The discussion also delved into suitable transaction instruments, legal architecture, preferred implementation models, and other critical aspects related to the envisioned development of the land parcels,” he adds.

The project reflects a proactive approach to enhancing the city’s infrastructure for high-value business events.

LAUNCHING THE NELSON MANDELA BAY BUSINESS EVENTS PANEL

Building the infrastructure for business events is only one part of the NMBCB’s challenge – the other being the need to build relationships and garner support across the industry. In this regard, Doné and his team have embraced an approach of collaboration and engagement, a point in case being the Nelson Mandela Bay Business Events Panel.

Currently being established, the Panel will comprise a mix of local and national industry associations. Doné explains, “The aim behind the Panel is to serve as a unified voice for the sector, identifying opportunities, addressing challenges and advocating for impactful policies, and providing strategic guidance to us as the Nelson Mandela Bay Convention Bureau.”
Meet the NMBCB team

Doné Louw
NMB Convention Bureau Manager
Doné oversees the overall operations of the Convention Bureau and works closely with the team to achieve its objectives.

Sadie Isaacs
Sales: Association & Corporate
Sadie plays a crucial role in sales, specifically targeting associations and corporate clients. Her efforts are geared towards attracting these entities to choose Nelson Mandela Bay as their preferred destination for business events.

Maryke Le Roux
Business Events Industry Stakeholder Relations
Maryke focuses on building and maintaining relationships within the business events industry. Her role is instrumental in ensuring collaboration and synergy with key stakeholders.

NELSON MANDELA BAY’S BUSINESS EVENT CAPABILITIES: AN OVERVIEW

VENUES & ACCOMMODATION
Nelson Mandela Bay stands out as an attractive destination for business events, offering a diverse range of both historic and modern venues of varying sizes, shares Doné. Venues suited to hosting large conferences and corporate events include establishments such as:
- The Boardwalk Convention Centre
- The Feathermarket Centre
- The Nelson Mandela University
- Tramways
- Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium
- Vulindlela Conference Centre
- Bluewater Bay Sunrise Hotel
A range of smaller venues are also available in strategic locations around the Bay area, typically accommodating 70 - 300 attendees, with flexible seating arrangements and set-ups. Many also boast state-of-the-art technical facilities while the region is home to a range of seasoned industry suppliers on standby to help your events succeed.

For those seeking exclusivity and comfort, private garden reserves, seaside resorts, and luxury hotels offer world-class conference facilities.

ACCESSIBILITY
Nelson Mandela Bay’s appeal as a premier business events destination is complemented by its accessibility. Located 763 km east of Cape Town on the south-eastern coast of Africa, Gqeberha is aptly known as the “15-minute city” owing to its smooth traffic flow and easily accessible motor freeways.

Convenient transport options include metered taxis, luxury air-conditioned coaches, and shuttle buses running regularly between the airport, hotels, and attractions, covering most of the city area. The centrally situated Chief Dawid Stuurman International Airport (PLZ) serves as a vital gateway to Nelson Mandela Bay. Well-connected and regularly serviced by various airlines, the airport is within easy reach from all parts of the city, ensuring a seamless experience for business travellers.

Whatever your needs, the NMBCB staff can help you source the perfect venue for your event.

WHAT THE NMBCB CAN DO FOR YOU
The NMBCB offers invaluable destination expertise for associations, corporates, professional conference organisers, and destination management companies interested in hosting MICE events in Nelson Mandela Bay and its surrounds.

“With a focus on streamlining processes, cutting through red tape, and providing comprehensive assistance, we play a pivotal role in facilitating access to tourism and business event sites and supporting clients throughout their event planning journey,” explains Doné.

Its services range from pre- and post-bid activities to convention planning and on-site logistical assistance, including bid presentations, promotional materials, bid site inspections, endorsement letters for approval of support, reduced rates, and official city welcomes, amongst many others.

For those who are interested in tapping into these services, please contact the NMBCB:

Maryke Le Roux

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+27 (0)41 585 8884
E-Mail: info@nmbt.co.za
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www.nelsonmandelabay.gov.za/page/business-events-services

Sadie Isaacs

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* A Dubai World Trade Centre study shared that for every $1 directly invested in an event at its venue, x74 that value would typically be created across the wider economy.
5 meeting spaces you NEED to know about

Each of these venues has such a different offering – but are alike in that they achieve it to perfection.

EMPERORS PALACE
FABULOUSLY FLEXIBLE
Moshate Communications’ portfolio covers a range of event types, from corporate conferences and gala dinners to music festivals and more, so the team has plenty of experience activating at a range of venues. When it comes to choosing their preferred venue based on flexibility, MD Mahlatse Masimini doesn’t hesitate to nominate Emperors Palace.

Mahlatse explains, “The venue is in close proximity to the OR Tambo airport and the motorway, and they have sufficient venues to suit any event, whether it’s a conference, gala dinner, workshop, or year-end function. They also have hotels to accommodate your guests within the same campus.”

Other advantages she cites include great live streaming solutions and cutting-edge AV technology, and supportive and friendly staff. “It’s also affordable in comparison to their competitors,” adds Mahlatse.

VENUE CAPACITY
The Emperors Palace Convention Centre is the embodiment of the perfect venue for a range of events, no matter how large or small. With 29 state-of-the-art facilities (complemented with stable WiFi access), its diverse range of multi-purpose venues and small executive breakaway rooms can cater for groups of 8 to 3 000.

In addition to these varied options, Emperors Palace events excel in the three essential ingredients of successful conferences and entertaining: superb cuisine curated by their skilled chefs, impeccable service imbued with warmth and professionalism, and an ambiance of sophistication and elegance.

The Emperors Palace property also has three world-class hotels to choose from, ranging from 3- to 5-star, while there are numerous entertainment options nearby to add-on to your events, such as restaurants, shopping, the casino, and day spas.

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e: sales@peermont.com
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HOTEL VERDE CAPE TOWN AIRPORT  
A SUSTAINABLE SUPER STAR  
Grace Stead, Founder of Steadfast Greening, is a sustainability consultant for the events industry. She recommends Hotel Verde for its impressive sustainable credentials which make it an ideal venue for green events.

Grace explains, “Hotel Verde goes beyond the call of duty to ensure that the venue brings sustainability into the core of their operations. Hailed as the ‘Greenest hotel in Africa’, it has received LEED Platinum status and rated 6 stars (the highest achievement) from the Green Building Council of SA.

“While it started with the design and construction of the building, it also includes the operations of the building such as energy and water efficiency, waste reduction, responsible procurement, social awareness, and carbon offsetting. There are also beehives, a wetland, and a natural pool on the property.”

Finally, the hotel provides 100% carbon neutral conferencing and accommodation at no added cost. This is achieved by a lowered carbon footprint owing to the hotels various sustainable benefits combined with the responsible purchase of carbon credits. The hotel even goes so far as to issue conference delegates and guests with an accredited certificate which they can use in their own business records, adds Grace.

VENUE SUSTAINABILITY  
Hotel Verde Cape Town offers eight state-of-the-art conferencing and events venues ideal for meetings, workshops, launches, and special events just 400 m from Cape Town International Airport.

From conception to design, building, and finally operations, the intent behind Hotel Verde was always to create it as sustainably as possible. For example, the hotel runs at 70% more energy efficient than any other Cape Town hotel.

An exciting new development is the recent opening of Verde Vita Spa and Wellness Centre. This state-of-the-art spa and wellness centre provides a range of treatments and services that are designed to promote relaxation, rejuvenation, and holistic wellbeing.

t: +27 (0)21 380 5500  
e: reservations@hotelverde.com  
w: hotelverde.com
OLIVES & PLATES
AN ALL-ROUND PALATE PLEASER

“I have been going to Olives & Plates for years now, starting at Wits University, mostly because their menu is always updated, they have the most diverse offerings, and wholesome delicious foods. Make good food and your clients will come back! This is evident at all the branches I have been to,” says Vanessa Perumal, MD of JT Communication Solutions.

Vanessa continues, “As they grew into Hyde Park, Sandton, Embassy Towers, and now in Waterfall, Olives & Plates continues to evolve in a way that distinguishes their brand. From comfortable spaces to the most globally fabulous menus, while innovating to keep their brand identity avant-garde, it’s special in a way that makes you want to come again.

“ Their establishments always offer a unique memorable experience for meetings, business, family, and events. Their prices cater across markets, and it always feels like you are on holiday or having a special experience at every visit.

”Their food is always fresh and of the highest quality, and their professional catering service gives guests an experience to savour.”

VENUE CATERING

What started out as a coffee shop in the 90s has grown into a well-recognised brand synonymous with excellent food and elegant delivery. The company can cater for private events, celebrations, and corporate events, hosted at their venue or one of your choice.

“Always fresh and of the highest quality, our professional catering services will give your guests an experience to savour. We follow our guests’ requests and assist in infusing the latest local and international gourmet trends into their unique personal needs. We cook to captivate and serve to please,” is the O&P promise.

With the addition of their latest property last year – Ellipse in Waterfall – O&P has four independent restaurants:

• Ellipse in Waterfall boasts panoramic sunsets, exclusive private dining rooms, executive boardrooms, inviting cozy bomas, and a sunlit pool deck.

• The Wits Club & Conference Centre in Parktown is housed in an elegant Cape Dutch building under the oak trees. Winter gatherings benefit from the cozy indoor fireplace, while in summer events can spill outdoors onto the manicured lawns.

• Embassy Towers in Sandhurst is nestled in picturesque gardens and offers a striking event backdrop overlooking the Joburg skyline. It also offers a private meeting space.

• Tucked away in Hyde Park Corner is the bookishly welcoming restaurant and cocktail bar, also boasting the brand’s signature of scenic views.

e: info@olivesandplates.co.za
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PRISON BREAK MARKET
UNIQUE & UNUSUAL

“I’ve had the pleasure of working on several PIT Symposums for Exxaro, but let me tell you, the one at the popular Prison Break Market was something else,” says Herkie du Preez, director and event strategist at STRONG PR, Marketing and Events.

The Prison Break Market is a collection of seven large sheds each with a completely different set-up. One of them is DreamBox, a unique space which features an ever-evolving collection of 14 boxes and various wall installations, designed for creating the most shareable, Instagram-worthy moments.

Herkie says, “Let’s talk about the unconventional setting for Day 1 – DreamBox, a trendy photo booth studio. Unusual for a conference venue? Absolutely. But it worked like a charm! Guests could engage with themed photo booths, adding a playful touch to the overarching theme: Strike a Balance. The relaxed vibe even got the speakers mingling with guests in the most relaxed and comfortable manner.”

Another hit on Day 1 was when guests received tokens to feast on gourmet goodies from the iconic food stalls at another shed, the Starfood Market. This offered a huge number of tantalising choices and created a buzz among the delegates.

On Day 2, the event shifted to the San Quentin Events shed, an expansive venue that provides a great canvas to get creative with. Herkie says the large space allowed them to go “all out with casual, comfortable seating – lounges, bean bags, coffee tables and cocktail tables”. The space also allowed them to bring in a massive see-saw, perfectly aligned with the Strike A Balance theme. “Not just for show, guests hopped on for a ride and used it as a fun backdrop for their insta-worthy pictures,” he adds.

“This is undoubtedly a meeting venue that deserves your attention, especially if you’re working with a client ready to break free from the conventional and craft an unforgettable experience, steering clear of the usual humdrum conferences,” concludes Herkie.

VENUE FEATURES

‘Breakout of your daily routine!’ encourages the venue’s website, while presenting the space in which to do just that. The Prison Break Market in Glenferness, Johannesburg, has seven unique sheds that each contribute different offerings, from crafter stalls and artisanal foods to creative crockery painting, interactive photo experiences (DreamBox), and a shed dedicated to distilling, brewing as well as wine tasting.

There are also sheds that can host private events. Shed 6, San Quentin Events, is the larger venue and can host up to 500 people, while the smaller venue has capacity for up to 30 people for private functions and team building sessions. Additionally, Shed 7, The Pourhouse, has The Gallery which is located on their mezzanine level indoors, and which can also host private bookings and reserved seating.

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#TOPPICKS
ZIEITZ MOCAA OCULAR LOUNGE & EVENTS SPACE
AN ARCHITECTURAL MARVEL

Monique Theron is the brand manager at The Aleit Group, a synergistic collection of businesses in the hospitality and events management field. When it comes to recommending the most stylish venue (inside and out), she believes it doesn’t get any better than the Zeitz MOCAA Ocular Lounge & Events Space.

She explains, “The Zeitz MOCAA Ocular Lounge & Events Space is housed within the iconic Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, a converted historic grain silo. Its avant-garde architecture, characterised by the stunning geometric glass windows that provide 270-degree panoramic views of Cape Town’s waterfront and Table Mountain, creates a unique and inspiring atmosphere for events and meetings.

“The Ocular Lounge & Events Space features beautiful black flooring and sleek touches that are truly unique and one-of-a-kind. Additionally, it boasts an amazing rooftop balcony with glass floors, providing a stunning view of the six levels of the beautiful museum from the top.”

The venue isn’t only gorgeous, it offers many other advantages. For one it is flexible for a range of event types and sizes. “Whether it’s an intimate business meeting, a product launch, or a larger corporate event, the Ocular Lounge can be adapted to accommodate diverse requirements, providing flexibility for a wide range of occasions,” says Monique.

VENUE HIGHLIGHTS

“Immerse yourself in an unparalleled fusion of art, cuisine, and breathtaking views at Ocular,” invites the website.

Perched atop Cape Town’s iconic heritage site, Zeitz MOCAA Ocular Lounge & Events Space invites you to elevate your events, literally and figuratively.

Beyond its scenic beauty and event capabilities, the Ocular Lounge & Events Space is part of the larger Zeitz MOCAA complex, boasting a 9 500 m2 custom-designed area dedicated to the exhibition of art. This integration of art and culture enhances the overall guest experience, providing a unique blend of aesthetic pleasure and intellectual stimulation.

Also housed within the larger silo complex, spanning nine floors, is a luxury hotel, a bar, a restaurant, and an additional venue space – the Atrium.

t: +27 (0)21 007 2572
e: info@zeitzmocaaevents.com
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Valley Lodge Conferencing: Every detail is important...

Valley Lodge & Spa, an award winning four star hotel nestled in the historic Magaliesburg valley, is a glorious blend of time-honoured traditions and modern hospitality. The professional and welcoming staff, the immense grounds interlaced with rivers and streams, indigenous vegetation and abundant animal and bird life, make this peaceful spot the ideal escape for any occasion.

A total of 76 luxurious refurbished rooms and suites, available in three room categories. All accommodation has either one king size bed or can be separated on request.

The rooms come equipped with a dressing table, comfortable easy chair, coffee table, an electronic safe and a flat screen TV.

Valley Lodge & Spa offer a stunning setting in which to host a wide range of events, covering everything from an incentive group to a corporate conference and smaller board meetings.

Our experienced co-ordinators are able to assist in planning your event with minimum fuss and maximum efficiency - making your event a unique experience.

Our twelve venues, all with natural light, are able to accommodate conferences, seminars, launches or corporate meetings, from five to two hundred and fifty delegates, and can be adapted to specific needs. All our venues offer modern facilities in a setting among lush greenery that is sure to inspire and motivate.

Our venue also offers ample breakaway venues as well as the option of a private dining venue for an exclusive event, specifically catering to your every need.

All rooms are individually air-conditioned, have under-floor heating in the bathrooms, electric blankets on the beds and have a tea/coffee station as well as a mini bar fridge, which is stocked on request. Outdoor furniture is provided on all terraces and verandas and rooms have internet access.

Our extensive grounds offer an ideal venue for outdoor team building activities and events and the unique hot air balloon safari over the Magaliesburg mountains guarantees an unforgettable experience. Please refer to our Team building section for additional information.

Ideally located an hour’s drive from Johannesburg and Pretoria, a mere 60 kilometers from Lanseria International Airport and 105 kilometers from OR Tambo International Airport, we are the perfect location for an event outside the hustle and bustle of busy city life.

13 Jennings Road  |  Magaliesburg  |  Gauteng  |  1791
Phone Number  014 004 0368
Email  sales@valleylodge.co.za
www.valleylodge.co.za

Valley Lodge & Spa
**Want a sustainable & stylish exhibition stand?**

**GREEN** is the new black and **PAPER** is the new wood

Chat'r Eco-Design uses eco-board to create stunning stands.

Intelligently engineered from recycled used cardboard boxes, eco-board looks and acts like MDF board, with sustainable benefits.

We prioritise the ENVIRONMENT in everything we do!

[Image of exhibition stand]

Green: 100% repulpable, strong, direct printable

www.chatr.co.za      Tel: 27 83 415 2774  chat@chatr.co.za
Keen to have a sustainable exhibition stand but don’t know how to go about creating one? Relax, Chat’r has you covered with these simple but effective steps.

For most of us, transitioning into a more sustainable way of doing things is a slow and fraught process. But this isn’t the case for Chat’r Xperience, a boutique brand engagement company that specialises in designing and building green exhibition stands and marketing activations.

John Arvanitakis, CEO and founder of Chat’r and vice chairperson of the Event Greening Forum, is passionate about driving sustainable adoption in the exhibition industry and has made it look easy with his own business. Since committing to ‘going green’ as recently as 2022, Chat’r has signed the Net Zero Carbon Events pledge (to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050) and has been pushing the boundaries of traditional exhibition design with innovative ideas and solutions.

Recognition has followed, including a Best Green Event EXSA-llence Award for the Exxaro Sustainability Summit 2023, an off-grid event in Lephalale, Limpopo, which included an exhibition component.

John says, "Many people think sustainability is hard, or expensive, or has inferior results. I'm out to prove them wrong!" In this spirit, he is sharing simple but effective ‘how to’ tips for designing and building more eco-conscious exhibits.

**Sustainable Exhibits Made Simple**

**GREEN DESIGN**

The sustainability of an exhibition stand is largely determined by one decision: will it be re-useable? Once-off structures are resource intense and wasteful, sending valuable materials to landfill after, at most, a few days. Instead, the green standard is to design robust, modular structures that can be re-used over time, whether as a single structure or as elements that can be used interchangeably like LEGO®.

As an example, Chat’r recently used eco-board to create a poster display for the University of the Western Cape. The team is now transforming it into an alternative for shell scheme booths – a staple component at most exhibitions, so it will get a lot of use in the coming years.

**GREEN PROCUREMENT**

Several eco-friendly materials are now on the market, and Chat’r has been quick to adopt eco-board for many of its designs. Eco-board has numerous environmental benefits: it is made locally, largely from recycled paper and is fully recyclable. It can be assembled and dis-assembled quickly with few tools, making re-use easier. Plus it packs flat and is lightweight to minimise its transport-related carbon footprint.

And it doesn’t end there. Graphics can be printed directly onto the board using eco-friendly inks, ensuring it is free of chemicals and VOCs (volatile organic compounds).

**Reduce Your Landfill Waste**

The rubbish we throw away doesn’t literally go away. It sits in landfill and creates several environmental problems, from the methane emissions of rotting organic waste to the leaching of chemicals into groundwater, and more.

For this reason, it’s better to divert waste from landfill and ensure our resources are re-used, re-purposed, and recycled in an endless loop (i.e. a circular economy). Luckily, if you have followed step 1 and 2, chances are you will have already achieved this!

By way of example of how effectively waste can be minimised with a sustainability mindset, Chat’r could fit all the waste created from the Total Energies custom stand build at NAMPO Cape Expo 2023 into a single small bag. (See the photo for proof!)

**Reduce Your Energy Use**

South Africa’s coal-supplied energy is a substantial climate change culprit so it goes without saying that using less electricity is more sustainable. How can you do this? From smart design choices (e.g. harnessing natural lighting) to smart operations (e.g. turning unneeded appliances off) as well as using energy efficient technology (e.g. LED lighting and screens), you can significantly cut your energy demand.

If you need help creating an exhibition stand or marketing activation that will positively impact your target audience without negatively impacting the environment, call John on +27 (0) 83 415 2774 or hello@chatr.co.za, or visit chatr.co.za.
Meet the EXSA-Illence Awards 2024 Winners

The EXSA Awards are back with a bang!

On 18 January 2024, the Exhibition and Events Association of Southern Africa (EXSA) hosted the highly anticipated return of its annual industry awards. Held at the CedarWoods of Sandton, the ‘out of Africa’-themed evening recognised and celebrated the high standard of ‘EXSA-llence’ that the industry achieved in 2022 and 2023.

The EXSA chairperson, Sibusiso Mncwabe, says, “My highlight of the evening came from past chairpersons and other invited associations congratulating EXSA on one of the best EXSA Awards thus far. This is obviously owing to the amount of work behind the scenes by Lee-Ann Alder, EXSA’s association manager, and the board, as well as the members who want to see EXSA succeed.”

He continues, “We saw our membership drop during and straight after Covid-19, but to see these numbers of attendees back and submitting beautiful work to be judged was heartwarming. The awards were won by a diverse group of companies, really showing that we have plenty of excellent companies ready to work hard for the industry. This also shows that, despite the difficult times, EXSA is still going strong and that our members are still passionate about the organisation. This is a testament to the hard work of Lee-Ann and the board, as well as the dedication and enthusiasm of our members. “We are grateful for the ongoing support and we are excited to see what the future holds for us. We believe that with the right resources and dedication, EXSA can reach even greater heights. “A big thank you to the sponsors for believing in the awards and to the members for attending and dressing to the theme.”

Sibusiso Mncwabe, EXSA chairperson

Lee-Ann Alder, EXSA association manager

MEET THE JUDGES
Five industry stalwarts were given the unenviable task of judging close to 200 EXSA award entries. They are:
- Simon Aubrey: Freelance exhibition and events specialist
- Sean Bailey: 180 Degree Digital
- Lorin Bowin-Peterson: Lorin Bowin Business Events
- Sonya Stoltz Emmett: StrucMAC
- Doug Rix: DK Design

The Green Awards were judged independently by the Event Greening Forum NPO.
AND THE WINNERS ARE...

THE CHAIRMAN’S AWARD
Each year, the EXSA chairperson chooses one individual to receive this award, for the passion and dedication they have invested into uplifting the industry.

• 2022: Liam Beattie from HOTT3D
• 2023: Kerry-Lee Bester from Brilliant Branding

HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES
EXSA’s Hall of Fame is for individuals who have stood out for their contribution to advancing and improving the industry over the years.

• Chad Botha: Inspire Rentals
• Mike Morris: New World Exhibitions
• Moses Nefale: Scan Display
• Liam Beattie: HOTT3D
• Kerry-Lee Bester: Brilliant Branding
• Jack Smit: Brandex

BEST EVENT:

• Small event, up to 100 attendees:
  Brandex (client: Africori, event: Umlando Music Video)
• Large event, over 350 attendees:
  Scan Display (client & show: Investing in African Mining Indaba)

2022 AWARD WINNERS
Custom built exhibition stands:

TUP (client: Babor, show: AMACSA)
2022 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 12-24 m²

Brilliant Branding (client: Drizit, show: Electra Mining)
2022 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 25-50 m²

The Exhibitionist (client: Crowdstrike, show: ITWEB Security)
2022 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 12-24 m²

Umtunzi (client: Moscow, show: IATF)
2022 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 51-100 m²

Brilliant Branding (client: Spec Cast, show: Electra Mining)
2022 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 101-200 m² and larger

Umtunzi (client: Mulotec, show: Electra Mining)
2022 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 200 m² and larger

Garona (client: Afrox, show: Electra Mining)
2022 Custom Built Pavilion

Brandex: Best Small Event

Scan Display: Best Large Event
2023 AWARD WINNERS

The Exhibitionist (client: CrowdStrike, show: ITWEB Security)
2023 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 12 m² & under

HOTT3D (client: Khuzela Energies, show: Windaba)
2023 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 12-24 m²

HOTT3D (client: OADC, show: Africa Tech Festival)
2023 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 25-50 m²

1UP (client: Alstom, show: Africa Rail)
2023 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 51-100 m²

Happinest (client: Disney+, Africa, show: Comic Con)
2023 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 101-200 m² and larger

Brilliant Branding (client: DP World Hospitality Marquee, show: Nedbank Golf Challenge) - Outdoor
2023 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 200 m² & larger

BEST EVENT:
- Small event, up to 100 attendees: The Exhibitionist (client: Private Investors, event: Private Investors Dinner)
- Medium event, 101-350 attendees: Garona (client: Festo, event: Automation Expo)
- Large event, over 350 attendees: Brandex (client: Spar, show: Sales Conference)

The Exhibitionist: Best Small Event

Garona: Best Medium Event

Brandex: Best Large Event

Jane & Paul (client: Hyve Events, show: Africa Oil Week)
2023 Custom Built Exhibition Stand 200 m² & larger

Expo Guys (client: Dega Expo Team - Germany, show: Africa Rail)
2023 Custom Built Pavilion
Meetings magazine is a popular B2B title for professionals in the business tourism and business events ecosystems, who need to keep their finger on the pulse of the latest news, trends, expert opinions, thought leader insights, best practices, and more. We pride ourselves on having original, relevant, and in-demand content – as well as being accessible, being freely available across multiple channels.

What makes Meetings UNIQUE?

- It is a leading source of business intelligence for the MICE and business events market;
- It is distributed to key industry decision-makers;
- It is accessible through multiple channels: print, newsletters, web, and social media;
- Endorsed by several leading industry associations, including AIPC, SAACI, EXSA, AAXO, the PCO Alliance Network, and the EGF.

SPECIAL FOCUS PUBLICATIONS

- **THE MEETING & EVENT PLANNER**
  This annual publication is an essential resource for event planners, cataloguing the industry’s leading venues and suppliers in a way that makes it easy to find the perfect solution for your next event. Complemented with handy advice, tips, and insights, it’s been dubbed ‘the event planner’s bible’.

- **THE INCENTIVE PLANNER**
  Looking for new and exciting destinations? The Incentive Planner is jam-packed with fresh ideas and top tips to turn any incentive trip into a memorable experience. Published annually.

- **THE EXHIBITION PLANNER**
  The Exhibition Planner is an essential tool for exhibitors. Information is packaged in an easily digestible format addressing the entire process of planning and arranging a show stand, what to do pre-show, during, and post-show. Published annually.

TO ADVERTISE

Vanessa Bisschoff
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www.theplannerguru.co.za
GREEN AWARDS:
- Best Green Event: Chat’r Xperience (client: Exxaro, event: Exxaro Sustainability Summit 2023)
- Best Green Exhibition stand: Brilliant Branding (client: Landocor, event: SASOP Congress)

ASSOCIATION AWARDS

This new award goes to an exhibition or event where EXSA collaborated on the show and worked with the various aspects of that show or expo. It will be a yearly award and will go to all the parties involved.

Association Award for the Best Collaboration Large Event/Exhibition:
- Music and Lifestyle Expo 2023
  - Organiser: Synergy Business Events
  - Infrastructure: Garona, Two Way & Scan Display
  - Audio Visual: Brandex
  - Venue: Sandton Convention Centre

Association Award for the Best Collaboration Large Event/Exhibition:
- ProPak 2023
  - Organiser: Specialised Exhibitions Montgomery
  - Infrastructure: GL Events
  - Health & Safety: Lodge Security
  - Cleaning Services: ZF Cleaning Services
  - Logistics: Exhibition Freighting GSM
  - Venue: CTICC
  - Registration: Tixsa

MEMBER AWARDS

These awards are voted for by EXSA members.
- Best AV and Production 2022 & 2023: Brandex
- Best Logistics Company 2022 & 2023: Exhibition Freighting GSM
- Full-Service Contractor 2022: GL Events
- Full-Service Contractor 2023: Scan Display
- Best Event/Expo 2022: CTICC
- Best Event/Expo 2023: CTICC
- Best Venue 2022: CTICC
- Best Venue 2023: Joburg Expo Centre
- Best Organiser 2022 & 2023: Specialised Exhibitions Montgomery

EVENT & EXHIBITION OF THE YEAR 2022
- Event of the Year: Brandex (client: Africori, event: Umlando Music Video)
- Exhibition of the Year 2022: Brilliant Branding (client: Drizit, exhibition: Electra Mining)

EVENT & EXHIBITION OF THE YEAR 2023
- Event of the Year: Garona (client: Festo, event: Automation Expo)
- Exhibition of the Year: HOTT3D (client: OADC, exhibition: Africa Tech Festival)
Meetings explores what our industry is doing to support young talent struggling to find their place in the events industry.

At face value, two South African challenges – youth unemployment and the event industry skills shortage – look like they could (at least partly) solve each other. Especially as there are many graduates in the job market. But it’s not that simple. Is it ever?

Potential employers want candidates with experience, but the unemployed are struggling to secure placements to gain experience, in a chicken and egg scenario. Compounding this is that many employers say that degree graduates are not work-ready, and they require someone who can hit the ground running.

**BREAKING THE INEXPERIENCE CYCLE**

Seipati Maaga has a National Diploma in Events Management from Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). She says that entering the job market has been tough, "I wouldn’t say I have a clear idea on who to approach. I’ve just been searching for various event companies and even if their sites have no available vacancies, I still send an application hoping it’ll land in the right hands. The challenge I face mostly is that most event companies require connections. You don’t get in through an application, you get in through someone that already works there, through recommendation."

She adds that most positions also require three years’ work experience, and trainee vacancies are scarce – it took her two years to find one with Event Synthesis. However, "My experience with Event Synthesis was life-changing. I learned more than school could have ever taught me. The biggest surprises were how broad the industry is, from corporate to leisure events, there is so much room for consistent growth as you navigate the industry.”

**EVENT SYNTHESIS: CREATING A WIN-WIN SCENARIO**

Angelique Smith, MD and founder of Event Synthesis, explains that the programme began as a way to build up a network of temporary staff for the large events her company often organises.

"It was important to me to take on event management, hospitality, or tourism students who want a career in the events industry and are passionate about it – so it’s not just a job for them. At the same time, they can gain the work experience they need to find permanent employment,” Angelique explains.

Consequently, Angelique has taken on and trained 186 students and graduates over the past five years, all of whom are now on her network and can put their hand up for assignments when they come up. But it’s more than just a hiring solution. Angelique also sees this as an opportunity to expose these young recruits to all aspects of event management – especially as many of them have unrealistic expectations of the type of work they should be doing.

She adds that many also need mentoring, from business coaching (gaining practical skills such as how to speak to clients, email and telephone etiquette, as well as ethical conduct) to developing leadership skills and cultivating a solutions-driven mindset – which is critical for success in the dynamic environment of eventing.

**TUT: A CONTINUOUS NEED TO DEVELOP EVENT MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS**

Dr Lisa Welthagen, subject head for event management at TUT, agrees that many event industry professionals have voiced concerns that young graduates are not work ready when they enter the job market. For this reason, she is currently conducting research to find out what skills the event industry is looking for in new recruits, and how the University can adapt its curriculum to ensure their students fit this profile.

While the research findings are scheduled to be published in April, Dr Welthagen has been able to share some of her findings already. One is that some eventing companies are reluctant to hire new graduates because they are too “fresh”, and they believe they will require “intense supervision and training” – a concern that can be a deterrent for companies still recovering from the impact of Covid. (However, this concern has turned out to be unfounded based on the feedback she has received from companies hiring TUT graduates, she adds.)

Another interesting finding Dr Welthagen highlights is the importance of personal aptitudes for this type of work. “There is a prominent focus from the industry to not only employ graduates with event management skills

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**FOCUS: TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT**

Bringing in the next generation
but also a high regard and consideration for personal attributes such as motivation, flexibility, accuracy, creativity, respect, trustworthiness, friendliness, and initiative to mention a few.” Many of these attributes come down to personality and are not necessarily teachable.

CEPA: BRIDGING THE GAP FROM STUDYING TO DOING
In her quest to ensure students have the right skillset for employment in the events industry, Dr Welthagen sits on the Council of Event Professionals Africa (CEPA), and TUT is one of several institutions of higher learning that are collaborating with CEPA to develop an academic patronage programme for their event industry students.

The programme will see CEPA members review the academic curriculum of the institutions they are working with while engaging with final-year students through CEPA’s student council and through an annual online conference explicitly aimed at them. Students will also be given the opportunity to write the qualifying exam for the Certified Event Associate designation, and gain work-integrated learning opportunities and part-time work opportunities in the industry (which they will need to earn a designation).

Dr Welthagen sees closer collaborations like this as key to attracting and nurturing young talent, as it creates a platform to “raise concerns, improve the curriculum, and discuss work-integrated learning opportunities”. Happily, there is a trend towards this, although most associations are currently in the early stages of providing youth programmes for students.

SAACI: EXPOSING STUDENTS TO THE INDUSTRY
SAACI, the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry, is one such association. Cheeta Payle is SAACI’s vice chair and was responsible for setting up the SAACI Youth Council in August 2022 as “a platform to expose youth to the industry, discuss challenges, and provide networking opportunities”. Currently six young people sit on the Council – a mix of 2nd and 3rd year students and young professionals – to share their input on how to move forward. (Incidentally, Cheeta is also the African representative on the ICCA Future Leaders Council – ICCA being the International Congress and Convention Association, which shows that bringing new talent into the industry is a global challenge and not unique to South Africa.)

One challenge the Youth Council identified, and which Angelique and Seipati also mention, is that many young people do not realise how multi-faceted the events industry is. “They might work in banqueting and hate it but there are other very different event jobs that could be a better fit and we are striving to make them aware of the full scope of options so we do not lose them to other industries,” says Cheeta.

This has led to several initiatives, including a student familiarisation tour in Cape Town at the end of last year, in collaboration with and sponsored by Wesgro (the Western Cape Tourism, Trade and Investment Promotion Agency) and CPUT (Cape Peninsula University of Technology). The group of CPUT students were taken to popular tourism spots around the city, as well as to a township for lunch, followed by a site visit at a leisure hotel and one a business events hotel.

“It was a huge success, and we are planning to roll out more student familiarisation tours in other provinces this year,” says Gheeta. SAACI also hosts student delegations at key industry events such as Meetings Africa, WTM Africa, and SAACI’s annual Congress, and often collaborates with Fedhasa’s (the Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa) youth programme, to expose them to more aspects of the industry.

Going forwards, Cheeta intends to work more closely with institutions of higher learning and do a follow-up-programme for graduates who haven’t yet found jobs, to better understand why and how to help them.

“It’s about succession planning,” says Cheeta, and ensuring the industry’s future leaders are primed to carry our legacy forward.

For more information
Event Synthesis learnership programme: Angelique Smith at angie@eventsynthesis.co.za
CEPA’s academic patronage programme: Kevan Jones at kevan@sacia.org.za
SAACI Youth Council: www.saaci.org/youth-programme/
DATA LEAKS WITH AI
Artificial intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines. AI can produce things that, historically, only people could – marketing copy, sponsorship proposals, poems, and even images and videos. And unlike humans, AI can do all of this within seconds.

There has been a phenomenal uptake of AI as a business tool since the launch of ChatGPT just over a year ago. The events industry is no different, and in the AMEX’s 2024 Global Meetings and Events Forecast report, 42% of respondents say they plan to use AI in some capacity in 2024.

As with all new tools, it’s important to understand how AI works and what risks it can present. One potential risk to consider is that AI accesses vast amounts of data on an open-source platform, which it uses to generate new content. And that what you put into your AI prompts can become part of this data pool – including your customers personal data.

Martin Naude is the founder and CEO of Synatic, a company that provides data integration and automation solutions. He explains, “Data used when prompting AI, especially public access such as OpenAI or Google Bard, may be incorporated into the training set and be exposed later. This may also contravene POPIA (Protection of Personal Information Act) requirements since it’s difficult to know what customer information is being used and how.”

He continues, “This is a rapidly evolving space though, and OpenAI states they won’t use customer data unless opted in so this should change soon. But to be on the safe side, don’t share your customer’s personal information through prompts on any AI tools.”

EXTREME WEATHER
In the past, weather patterns have been largely predictable, and event planners knew to avoid certain places at certain times as a general precaution. However, as climate change causes weather patterns to shift and incidents of extreme weather events become more common (think heat waves, flooding, snowstorms, etc.), this is becoming harder to do. What can event planners do to mitigate this threat?

While your risk management planning should make provisions for adverse weather conditions, another adaptive move is to plan smaller gatherings, writes the SKIFT Meetings Mega Trends 2024 report. Smaller events can be moved and adapted far more readily than large-scale ones, and with less financial risk.

Addressing the risks that climate change poses must also extend to being part of the climate change solution. With research showing that the broader events industry may be responsible for as much as 10% of global carbon emissions*, we all have a role to play in slowing the impacts of climate change and, ultimately, the havoc it can wreck on our businesses and industry.

SAFETY & SECURITY
Edward Beeka, head of operations at Pro Events Security, says, “Protest Action has increased significantly over the past years in South Africa as most citizens deem this as a last resort in expressing their grievances.”

As a national election year, there is a greater likelihood of protest action this year too. “During election periods people become more conscious of unresolved disputes which impacts the probability of protests occurring more frequently,” agrees Edward.

He therefore recommends the following strategies to mitigate the risk of protest disruptions at your events:

Choose your security team wisely: Ensure that your security service provider is registered with the Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority (PSIRA) and is well versed in the legal aspects of event safety as well as the Safety at Sports and Recreational Events Act 2 (SASREA) 2010.

All security personnel also need to be PSIRA-accredited and special events qualified, and they must possess embedded knowledge in managing crowd behaviour with required interventions.

Take your risk assessment seriously: A threat risk assessment needs to be conducted for the event during the pre-planning phase and recommended risk mitigating measures need to be prioritised over the budget. Equally critical is that all service providers involved in the event have a contingency plan to maintain critical functions after an emergency or disruption should disruptions occur in immediate proximity of event.

In the build-up to and during the event, constant communication with the SAPS Sector Commander will ensure any early warning threats are detected while intelligence gathering via social media is also essential to gauge public perception continuously.

Lastly, Edward also suggests you can make provision for a Speakers Corner where peaceful demonstrations can occur outside the event if there is a likelihood of this happening.

*https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-021-27251-2

Being prepared is the default setting for the events industry, which is why Meetings is sharing these three risks to bear in mind as you plan for the year ahead.
2024 HIGHLIGHTS

Save the dates of these key MICE industry events.

Meetings Africa 2024
Meetings Africa is South African Tourism’s flagship business tourism event. It serves as the primary platform to enable the growth of the business events industry on the continent and ultimately contribute towards economic growth.
Venue: Sandton Convention Centre, Jhb
Dates:
• BONDay: 26 February 2024
• Exhibition: 27-28 February 2024
Website: www.meetingsafrica.co.za

SITE Global Conference 2024
The Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) is hosting its annual conference in Istanbul in 2024, under the theme “Building and Bridging Cultures”.
Venue: Conrad Istanbul Bosphorus, Istanbul, Türkiye
Dates: 26-29 February 2024
Website: siteglobal.com/event/global-conference-istanbul

WTM Africa 2024
World Travel Market Africa brings the world to you and promotes Africa to the world, allowing you to explore a world of opportunities, all under one roof.
Venue: Cape Town International Convention Centre, Cape Town
Dates: 10-12 April 2024
Website: www.wtm.com/africa/

Africa’s Travel Indaba 2024
Africa’s Travel Indaba, owned and managed by South African Tourism, is one of the largest tourism marketing events on the African calendar and one of the top three ‘must-visit’ events of its kind on the global calendar.
Venue: Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre (Durban ICC) & Durban Exhibition Centre (DEC), Durban
Dates:
• BONDay: 08 May 2024
• Exhibition: 09-11 May 2024
Website: www.indaba-southafrica.co.za

Africa Youth in Tourism Innovation Summit & Challenge 2024
This annual pan-African innovation summit and entrepreneurship ecosystem is aimed at talented African youth and startups in tourism, travel, and hospitality related industries.
Venue: Windhoek, Namibia
Dates: 28-31 May 2024
Website: youthtourismsummit.com

TBCSA Conference 2024
This will be the third edition of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa’s (TBCSA) annual tourism leadership conference, providing an open Forum for the private sector, public sector, academia, and media to come together and discuss the opportunities and challenges facing the local tourism sector.
Venue: Sun City Resort, North West Province
Dates: 8-20 September 2024
Website: tbsca.travel

Africa Tourism Leadership Forum (ATLF) & Awards 2024
ATLF is a Pan-African dialogue platform. It brings together key stakeholders of Africa’s travel, tourism, hospitality, and aviation sectors to network, share insights, and devise strategies for intra-Africa travel and tourism growth across the continent, whilst enhancing the brand equity of ‘Destination Africa’.
Venue: Gaborone International Convention Centre, Gaborone, Botswana
Dates: 3-6 September 2024
Website: www.tourismleadershipforum.africa

ICCA 63rd Congress
ICCA, the International Congress and Convention Association, is the global meetings industry network.
Venue: Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre, Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates
Dates: 20-23 October 2024
Website: www.iccaworld.org

Travel-focused workshops
C&L Travel Collection pride themselves on creating and hosting product specific and cost-effective face-to-face marketing platforms countrywide where they facilitate networking, sales and education by sourcing applicable suppliers and inviting potential buyers to participate in a morning of education and fun. Examples of their focused workshops include, among others, Conference & Occasions, The Best of Botswana, The Best of East Africa, The Best of Namibia, The Best of Zimbabwe and Zambia, and Cruising and Islands.
Would you like to participate in these events, as a supplier or visitor, please contact Clair at Clair@candltravel.co.za.

Entries now open: WTM Africa Responsible Tourism Awards 2024!
WTM Africa is urging responsible tourism businesses to enter their Responsible Tourism Awards 2024. The deadline for entries is 1 March 2024.
The awards are free to enter. All applications will be overseen by an expert panel of judges across six curated categories, which include:
1. Making travel inclusive
2. Championing cultural diversity
3. Nature positive
4. What are you doing about climate change?
5. Increasing local sourcing – creating shared value
6. Employing and upskilling local communities
Gold winners in each category will automatically compete in the Global Responsible Tourism Awards against finalists from India and Latin America.
Interested participants are encouraged to submit their applications via the WTM Africa website: www.wtm.com.
Strawberry fields in New York

Sven Bossu and Erik Waldman share some of the unique ways that the Javits Center is taking the lead as a truly sustainable conference centre.

The Javits Center in New York is a remarkable place, which has been transformed from a black box into a crystal palace and is now leading the way when it comes to being a truly sustainable conference centre. Some remarkable initiatives were taken, resulting in tangible and sometimes surprising outcomes.

A GARDEN IN THE SKY
It is not something you would expect in the heart of New York, next to the Hudson River: a strawberry field. The rooftop garden of the Javits Center offers apples, pears, strawberries, a wide variety of herbs and vegetables and ... a great view. The farming team takes great pride in their job and explain that the choice of crops and even the timing of harvesting is carefully planned in close collaboration with the catering team and goes to the level of the size of tomatoes needed. Any leftovers are either being frozen for future use or distributed to social organisations.

The garden, which spans 6.75 acres, is one of the many initiatives taken by the Javits Center to become more sustainable. Another one – visible and not visible at the same time – is the bird-friendly glass used during the revamp of the venue. Just in case you're wondering, bird-friendly glass has little dots in it, making sure the birds see it as a barrier. For a massive structure like the Javits Center, with lots of glass, the impact of the investment is substantial. Not only has the number of “casualties” plummeted, but the centre has now become a habitat of 35 bird species.

POWER OF THE FUTURE
The attention for our feathered friends is also included in a new initiative which is currently in R&D phase: the implementation of wind energy. The plan is to install small wind-capture installations on the roof of the venue in order to diversify energy sourcing further (next to the solar panels already in place). The mills will be slowly turning and will stop the moment something hits them.

A small but telling detail is that, to optimise energy generation, the mills will be installed on top of the exhaust pipes of the air conditioning, making sure that all opportunities to generate energy are used. Both the generation and use of energy are indeed major attention points for the Javits Center also because it happens that the venue is requested to reduce energy consumption to compensate for energy usage by other organisations as part of a city-wide energy-balancing exercise. That is why 35 MW of battery storage will be installed by the end of 2024, providing the venue with more than 2 gigawatt hours per year of renewable energy.

TEAMWORK FUELED BY PASSION
Becoming sustainable is however a team effort, requiring all parties involved to support the centre’s objectives. One area where this becomes very clear is waste management and, more specifically, the sorting and collection of the venue’s largest recycling waste streams such as cardboard. A big effort has been made on several levels, from employee training and requiring a waste management plan from event producers to investing in specific balers.

Similar to the people in charge of the garden roof, the team involved in collecting cardboard take pride in their job and go the extra mile to make sure as much cardboard as possible is recycled. And, similar to the garden, the results booked are impressive.

It is both inspiring and energising to walk through the venue and to be given insights into the thinking behind the efforts made to make the centre as sustainable as possible. Both the CEO and president, Alan Steel, and the director of energy and sustainability, Yashi Dadhich, are generous with their time and in sharing their stories. That is why AIPC will invite them to the Operational Excellence Summit in November and also have them involved in our other educational programmes. It is by sharing stories like these that we make progress as a community.

The AIPC Operational Excellence Summit is being extended to a two-day event, and will take place at the Barcelona International Convention Centre (CCIB) in Barcelona, Spain, on 25-26 November 2024.

Visit aipc.org/operational-excellence-summit/ to find out more.
African exhibition and events industry gears up for AAXO ROAR Awards 2024

Like the rest of the African exhibition and events industry, Devi Paulsen-Abbott is eagerly anticipating the highlight of the season, the Association of African Exhibition Organisers’ (AAXO) ROAR Awards 2024.

The ROAR Awards 2024 aim to recognise and celebrate excellence in exhibition organisation, providing a distinctive platform for participants to showcase their events and position them as exemplars of success, while also presenting a unique opportunity for participants to highlight their teams’ accomplishments in marketing, public relations, operations, and activation.

“As we eagerly anticipate the ROAR Awards, let us unite in transforming this event into a resounding celebration of triumphs, ground-breaking innovations, and the spirit of collaboration that defines the African exhibition and event industry.”

Exciting developments for this year’s awards include Blueberry Concepts joining AAXO as the official facilitation partner, overseeing event coordination and commercial partnerships, and the Gallagher Convention Centre in Midrand declaring its role as the presenting venue sponsor for the ROAR Awards 2024.

The net zero charter could be the biggest, more important, undertaking the global industry is facing, argues Devi Paulsen-Abbott. Will you play a part in it? Understanding emission levels is the only way the industry can be held accountable.

The workshops also facilitated vital discussions around practical challenges and potential solutions. We collectively identified universal event indicators to benchmark emissions performance across different events. Standardised indicators will be crucial for tracking progress industry-wide.

The NCZE workshops made this long-term goal being full decarbonization by 2050. I urge all industry players to sign up and help us build a responsible legacy for future generations.

Signing up and show up! With the progress made this past year through our “Journey to Net Zero” campaign, South Africa’s events industry can become a global sustainability leader. However, NCZE remains critical for providing guidance and accountability up until 2050. I urge all industry players to sign up and help us build a responsible legacy for future generations.

Want to find out more? Visit www.eventgreening.co.za/journey-to-nzce/ and watch recordings of our past workshops and access more NZCE resources.

The need for decarbonisation isn’t going away

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, our strides in championing sustainability within the events industry inspire me. The past year has been a testament to our shared dedication to creating a positive impact on the environment and the communities we serve through green events.

Our recent “Journey to Net Zero” campaign events allowed us to champion the critical cause of sustainability in the events industry and provide much-needed support to our members.

The Net Zero Carbon Events (NCZE) project remains our flagship commitment to urgent climate action. As the chairperson of the EGF, the NCZE provides the events industry with a robust yet realistic pathway towards drastically reducing emissions, with the end goal being full decarbonization by 2050.

EFG WORKSHOPS UNPACK THE ISSUES

The EGF workshops conducted thus far have outlined what is expected from the events industry to align with international climate targets. We took our attendees through the NCZE commitment process step-by-step, explaining key concepts from carbon footprinting to offsetting. One of the key takeaways was the importance of measurement “If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.” Understanding emission levels is the only way the industry can be held accountable.

The events industry understands the gravity of the climate crisis and is ready to take ownership of its role. However, realising net zero will require continued effort and investment over the next three decades. Our workshops made this long-term view more manageable by breaking down the steps event organisers must take.

WILL YOU BE THERE?

As we eagerly anticipate the ROAR Awards, let us unite in transforming this event into a resounding celebration of triumphs, ground-breaking innovations, and the spirit of collaboration that defines the African exhibition and event industry. Together, let’s create an unforgettable testament to the achievements and collective efforts that continue to shape our dynamic and vibrant community.

KEY INFORMATION

Award Ceremony: 29 February 2024
Venue: Gallagher Convention Centre, Midrand, SA
Register your team for the award ceremony to network with industry leaders, discover new opportunities, and collectively celebrate the success of the African exhibition and event industry.

For more information on the ROAR Awards 2024, including sponsorship and tickets, visit www.aaxo.co.za/roar-awards/ or email aaxo@aaxo.co.za. Please note that there are a limited number of seats available, bookings will close on 22 February 2024.

For more information on the “Journey to Net Zero” campaign, visit www.eventgreening.co.za/journey-to-nzce/ and watch recordings of our past workshops.

Sign up and show up! With the progress made this past year through our “Journey to Net Zero” campaign, South Africa’s events industry can become a global sustainability leader. However, NCZE remains critical for providing guidance and accountability up until 2050. I urge all industry players to sign up and help us build a responsible legacy for future generations.

Want to find out more? Visit www.eventgreening.co.za/journey-to-nzce/ and watch recordings of our past workshops and access more NCZE resources.

The enthusiasm and participation from our members throughout the NCZE workshops have been tremendous. The events industry understands the gravity of the climate crisis and is ready to take ownership of its role. However, realising net zero will require continued effort and investment over the next three decades. Our workshops made this long-term view more manageable by breaking down the steps event organisers must take.
An opportunity to learn and grow

Jacqui Nel shares feedback on EXSA’s first post-Covid Conference.

Our conference this year focuses on the changes and expectations for 2024. The world is changing and we must embrace the change.

EXSA Chairperson Sibusiso Mncwabe opened the conference, which was followed by a panel discussing expectations for the year from an organisers, health and safety, engineering, and venue perspective. Our panellists were: Gary Corin, MD of Specialised Exhibitions Montgomery; Jaco van Dyk, MD of Impi Protection Agency; Eldon de Jager, HoD: Engineering Impi Protection Agency, and Adele Hartdegen, CEO of Johannesburg Expo Centre. There was robust discussion around these aspects as everyone strived to build a platform for good communication and an understanding amongst all participants of an event or exhibition.

PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE
Nicolas Curle, MD of Nucleus Vision Group of Companies, helped us navigate the mostly misunderstood world of AI (artificial intelligence) and what its impact is going to be in the future. He really took the fear of the unknown away and gave everyone a deeper understanding. He also touched on the power of storytelling and branding.

Authentication is the key to success in the future. Liam Beattie, MD of HOTT3D, and John Arvanitakis, CEO of Chat'r, discussed the importance of sustainability and what we all need to put in place for the year. They gave practical tips on how to simplify things but remain aware. Awareness is half the battle won and it doesn’t have to be a long, laborious task. The more we practise it the easier it becomes in our daily lives.

Our keynote speaker, Grant Driver from Captivate International, ended the conference with an incredible message on how we process change and adapt accordingly. His formula for success is very doable and it reaffirmed that business is about people and how we work with them will determine our successes. Grant reiterated that authenticity is a real game changer, we should embrace our imperfections with uniqueness.

The conference seating arrangement in couch pods, provided by Urban Tonic, were ingenious. Everyone was comfortable and this led to a relaxed, engaged environment where it was easier to absorb and retain the very important information being disseminated.

EXSA thanks everyone who attended and spoke, and our generous sponsors – we really appreciate your support.

Numbers help us all

Glenton de Kock urges the industry to participate in research opportunities actively.

This time of year is one in which many of our professionals, business events services providers, clients and delegates have clarity on how the first and possibly the second quarter of the calendar will reflect where growth may occur in many meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions within South Africa.

What 2024 can do for many is also clearly reflected through numbers and the significant impact our industry makes in our social economy. We all know this but these are the year that we may be able to share data, numbers, and learnings which illustrate this impact for the less informed on how we as an industry can make a difference.

Research plays a pivotal role in enhancing the South African MICE industry’s competitiveness and sustainability, reporting on the overall success, areas for growth where we may have challenges and how we can keep the sector sustainable. It provides the knowledge to make informed decisions, adapt to changing trends, and deliver exceptional experiences for clients and attendees.

We can all agree that focused, well-participated, and regular research of the meetings and events industry will help us all. This could include market insights into attendee preferences, industry trends, and the competitive landscape of the South African MICE market as well as South Africa’s competitiveness as an attractive destination on the global stage. We may also understand the specific needs and expectations of clients and attendees, which will allow businesses in the industry to tailor their offerings more effectively.

We cannot underscore enough that research can quantify the economic impact of MICE events in South Africa. This includes assessing the direct and indirect contributions to the economy, job creation, and revenue generation. Such data is valuable for showcasing the industry’s significance to policymakers and stakeholders.

**RESEARCH IS ONLY AS GOOD AS ITS RESPONSES**

SAACI calls on all within the meetings and events industry to invest in research participation in the coming year. The South African meetings and events industry can not only address local challenges but also contribute to the industry’s growth, competitiveness, and overall positive impact on the economy and society. Our collective efforts to participate in research for our industry will provide the knowledge needed to make informed decisions and navigate the ever-evolving landscape of the industry.
Embracing sustainability in event planning

No one entering a career in events could have anticipated having to become an eco-expert. Yet here we are, writes John Arvanitakis.

Like so many others, I chose the events industry for the glory. That, and the satisfaction, status, and abundant prosperity that would inevitably follow every grandiose affair I successfully pulled off. I certainly didn’t become an event professional to save the earth.

I joke, only a little, but with words like “sustainability” and “green practices” on the lips of every second person one meets, it’s no wonder professionals from just about every industry are feeling out of their depth. As much as event organisers want to knock the socks off their hosts, VIPs, and delegates, growing awareness about environmental issues is forcing more and more PCOs to prioritise sustainability – and for good reason, too.

Few people are fully aware of how significantly conferences and events impact the environment. Studies observe that the event industry is the most wasteful in the world, with each attendee producing an estimated 1.89 kg of waste and over 170 kg of CO2 emissions daily.

This excludes the carbon footprint of global air travel related to events, which amounts to 2.05 % of global emissions, and the large amounts of water, energy, and single-use materials that typically take to create memorable events.

When one considers this enormity of environmental impact, it becomes clear why understanding, planning, and implementing green practices needs to become an integral part of every event organiser’s processes. However, even though adopting green practices could position one as a leader in the industry and contribute to building a better future, it comes with its fair share of complications.

ARE SUSTAINABLE EVENTS THE UGLY DUCKLINGS OF THE INDUSTRY?

Despite the growing popularity of green events and activations, we’re still seeing clients and stakeholders struggling with misconceptions about them.

The most common of many misconceptions is that organising green events is overly complex and time-consuming, and that sustainable events are more costly when compared to traditional events.

Others assume that the resources or expertise needed to organise green events are completely inaccessible, especially in South Africa where technologies and new materials have historically been slower to emerge.

Another misconception is that green practices limit creativity and flexibility in event design and that sustainable materials deliver an inferior, impractical experience to event delegates – a perception I can personally affirm from the perspective of having to use a soggy paper straw to quench my thirst from a single-use water bottle. Oh, the insanity!

This is not to say that event organisers don’t face very real challenges in planning and implementing green events. It can be difficult to find suppliers who prioritise sustainability in some regions, and many venues still lack the infrastructure to support sustainable practices, such as recycling facilities or energy-efficient lighting and backup power.

Meanwhile, the costs associated with upgrading venues remain a hindrance to making progress toward long-term sustainability.

So yes, at the onset, it all looks rather a mess. An ugly duckling, if you will. The thing about ducklings, though, is that they transform over time – and so it is with sustainable events. With patience and commitment to taking small steps forward, something rather magnificent emerges on the other side.


SELLING SUSTAINABILITY AS A SWAN

I’ve spent years watching sustainable events evolve and mature. From its awkward and floundering youth, I believe the industry is finally ready to take flight. Innovative solutions and impassioned organisers are more available than ever.

It’s now entirely possible to use eco-friendly materials for the majority of trade show and activation set-ups and to ensure that materials are designed for reuse. As South Africans, we’ve become experts in off-grid living, which places us in a prime position to master off-grid events, as well as energy- and resource-efficient events.

We can go so much further, by simplifying sustainability into three easy guidelines:

what’s disposed of is biodegradable; whatever isn’t biodegradable is reusable; renewable energy is key.

To make green events more appealing, we need to educate clients and stakeholders on the benefits and the feasibility of hosting sustainable activations. We can begin by shifting our focus to the potential cost savings through energy conservation, waste reduction, and local procurement, and raising awareness among event participants, staff, suppliers, and communities about why we actively choose green practices over traditional ones. We can demonstrate commitment to sustainability beyond just one event by collaborating with handpicked organisations that prioritise eco-friendly business. In doing so, we also compel other service providers to follow suit, or risk becoming obsolete.

Many small steps eventually make a mile.

SAVING THE EARTH IS A JOB FOR ALL OF US

Not a single one of us is a bystander when it comes to earth-conscious living. Sustainability, with all its complexities, is achievable when each and every person approaches it with simplicity, intentional decisions, and long-term commitment, event after event and day after day.

CEPA commence the roll-out of professional designations

Kevan Jones shares the history and progress made by CEPA in recent years, as well as its importance in formalising the professionalism of South Africa’s eventing industry.

Over the Festive season, more than 150 industry professionals wrote the qualifying exam for SACIA’s Certified Event Management designation with about half scoring a passing mark of 65% or more.

A DECADE IN THE MAKING
We’re excited by this achievement because the development of professional designations for the events industry stretches out over the last decade. The process started around 2013 when the Council of Event Professionals Africa (CEPA) was established as a three-way partnership between the Exhibition and Event Association of Southern Africa (EXSA), the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI), and the International Festivals and Events Association (IFEAS).

The three associations aimed to establish an independent professional body that could develop and award professional designations to event-industry professionals. However, it was a stop-start process that failed to deliver results until CEPA was reconstituted as a special interest group within SACIA in 2019.

ENSURING COMPETENCE IS EVIDENT
Three designations were then developed and registered with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), at Associate, Practitioner, and Professional levels. The next step for those members who’ve passed the qualifying exam is to prepare a Portfolio of Evidence that will support their claim of competence at a specific level. There is no definitive list of documents that should appear within the portfolio, but generally it would include:

- A detailed CV including a list of events an applicant has worked on.
- Testimonials and letters of recommendation supporting their claim of knowledge, experience, and competence.
- A list of any awards or commendations they’ve received.
- Any other documents that support their claim of competence.

We don’t provide a template for the reference letters because we want a positive endorsement written by someone familiar with the candidate’s work, character, and accomplishments.

These Portfolios of Evidence will be reviewed during February. Candidates meeting all the qualifying requirements will be awarded certificates during Meetings Africa 2024 at the Sandton Convention Centre from 26 to 28 February.

AN INDUSTRY IN SUPPORT OF PROFESSIONALISATION
The qualifying exams have been well received by industry pundits. Pieter Swart from the Conference Consultancy describes the exam as a “carefully constructed test that assesses knowledge and insight over a wide spectrum of topics relevant to event management”.

Matshepo Njilo from Jatamansi Consulting is equally optimistic. She describes earning a professional designation as a ‘pivotal moment in her professional journey’.

In contrast, Bheki Twala from the Township Events Business Council describes the designations as “critical to recognise the abilities of event organisers who lack formal training and have entered the events industry through experience rather than academic learning”.

CEPA describes these professional designations as critical in recognising the competence of industry professionals in the events sector. For many years, the events industry has been a bit like the wild-west – completely disregarding professional standards and ethical business practices. This Wild West mentality needs to be eliminated and people like Matshepo Njilo are driving this change.

Well done to all who have written the qualifying exam and started on the journey toward professional certification.

READ + CLICK + EARN CPD points

Meetings magazine has partnered with the Southern African Communications Industries Association (SACIA) to offer Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits for those seeking to maintain their professional designation with SACIA.

If that’s you, after reading this issue, please head on over to theplannerguru.co.za and click on the ‘EARN CPD POINTS’ tab to take a short survey and earn one CPD credit.

For information on event management designations, visit sacia.org.za/event_management.

To subscribe (for free!) to Meetings magazine so you don’t ever miss an issue (or the opportunity to earn CPD points), visit theplannerguru.co.za.
How AI can help, but not replace, the personal touch in incentives

Tes Proos unpacks some of the IRF’s 2024 Trends Report findings on the role that AI is likely to fill – and not fill – in the future of incentives.

The Incentive Research Foundation (IRF) is a private not-for-profit foundation dedicated to understanding, educating, and advocating for the use of non-cash incentives. Every year it publishes reports tracking the latest trends and developments in this global industry, which provide great insights for professionals. The latest 2024 Trends Report is no different, highlighting, among other things, the powerful influence that artificial intelligence (AI) is anticipated to have on the incentive industry.

TAPPING INTO DEEP DATA POOLS
The report shares: “AI can be used to enable greater personalization in rewards and shift towards true individualization, tailoring travel experiences and merchandise rewards to specific employees. Employee performance can be monitored and analyzed in real-time, enabling the frequent feedback and rewards critical to motivating younger workers. “Incentive professionals can use AI to tap into deep data pools to identify patterns, trends, and correlations, enabling organizations to make informed decisions on reward programs and policies. AI can even help reduce potential biases in reward and recognition systems by analyzing employee performance data objectively, ensuring fair and equitable distribution of rewards.”

THE POTENTIAL PITFALLS OF AI
While these are the positive outcomes that AI can deliver, potential concerns are also flagged. One is the need to ensure that the vast amounts of personal data being processed are handled ethically, and that robust security measures are in place to protect it. Another concern is that this could result in significant job losses. (The report shares that McKinsey Global Institute believes that up to 30% of hours worked across the US economy could be automated by as soon as 2030!) However, a counter argument to this is that while AI is a great at automated tasks dealing with large volumes of data, it cannot replace incentive planners and professionals. “While this sense of ideation and possibility [with AI] is interesting, execution clearly sits with humans... as well as the personal touch that makes incentives and rewards so powerful.”

HUMANS ARE STILL BEST AT THE ‘HUMAN STUFF’
This viewpoint was confirmed for me by a recent experiment at Professional Convention Management Association (PCMA) Convening Leaders 2024 conference in San Diego. Event planners at the event were split into two teams and asked to devise an event marketing campaign for a real client. The catch was that one team could use AI and the other couldn’t. The outcome surprised many, with the team that couldn’t use AI outperforming their peers by being far more creative.

Shawn Cheng, event strategist at Curious Bear Management and the competition creator and judge, said, “What we saw was how people’s behaviour changes when a tool like AI is involved. The team without AI came together and threw ideas off each other.” Meanwhile the team with AI “gave up in some way, giving up their own thinking and just following what AI told them and building on that. AI is just a tool. The human brain is still most important,” he adds.

To download your free copy of the 2024 Trends Report, visit www.incentiveindex.com.

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The Meetings & Event Planner is essential if you’re organising any type of event. Published annually.

The Incentive Planner is jam-packed with fresh ideas and top tips to turn any incentive trip into a memorable experience. Out each year in September with Meetings.

The Exhibition Planner is an essential tool for exhibitors. Information is packaged in an easily digestible format addressing the entire process of planning and arranging a show stand, what to do pre-, during and post-show. Published annually.
Justin Hawes is the MD of Scan Display, an exhibition stand building and event infrastructure company. Here he shares the story of how his Cape Town factory was destroyed by a fire yet he was still able to deliver for his clients.

The show must go on” is a truism in the exhibition industry. So when the Scan Display factory on Cape Town’s Foreshore caught fire on the evening of 23 December 2022, we immediately went into emergency planning to make sure no clients would be let down.

Fortunately, because of the time of the year the fire happened, no one was in the building and there were no casualties. However, the stock and equipment were too badly damaged to salvage – either destroyed in the fire or warped and damaged from the water used to douse the flames. Among other losses was 1.4km of custom walling we had ready for the approaching Investec Cape Town Art Fair, which was no longer usable owing to water damage.

We had built this walling for previous editions of the Investec Cape Town Art Fair, and at 2.7 m and 3.6 m in height, it was far higher than the standard 2.4 m walling most exhibitions use. And so, from 23 to 25 December, we were frantically calling around to source enough board to be able to re-make it all.

A DREAM TEAM

What was really amazing about this experience was how my team responded to it. It was Christmas and the only period in the year when our busy industry shuts down yet they all chose to cancel their leave and help rebuild our new factory so that we could be up and running in time for the new year and the projects we had pending. I was blown away by their camaraderie and commitment to making sure the show did go on.

Our client asked if we could still do the Investec Cape Town Art Fair and I promised them we would deliver – and we did.

The 10th edition of the Investec Cape Town Art Fair was held at the CTICC from 17 to 19 February 2023 and it was a resounding success, showcasing 337 artists and attracting 25 000 visitors, 106 exhibitors from 18 different countries, and 6 700 VIPs.

We were also able to supply infrastructure and several custom stands for Investing in African Mining Indaba 2023, which was held from 6 to 9 February, also at the CTICC – although we leaned heavily on our Johannesburg factory to deliver these projects.

In a way, our exhibition industry experience made us well-suited to dealing with this disaster. We are used to problem-solving, thinking on our feet, and adapting. We build structures in short timeframes and these abilities enabled us to be operational again so quickly.

 Customs confusion

A lighter story Justin shares is about a consignment of spider clamps that he shipped to Zambia. The clamps were stopped at customs and held up for a week without any explanation. Justin explains, “Spider clamps are aluminium clamps with eight sides – hence the name. The Zambia customs held the shipment and wouldn’t tell us why. Eventually, after lots of phone calls and confusion, we realised they thought we were illegally importing actual spiders into the country!”

Needless to say, soon after the misunderstanding was cleared up, the stock was received.

Have a story to share?

Funny, bizarre, or just downright extreme, please share your #eventprof stories with us and our readers by sending them to editor@4mal.co.za.
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7 EVENT ROOMS | 854 SQM TOTAL EVENT SPACE | 400 LARGEST SPACE PAX
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